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Ask the Abbot

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Abbot, do you happen to know what musical was the first hosted at St. Norbert College?

Katy Verheyden '21

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February 2020

Question:

Dear Abbot Pennings,

Recently I worked as the scenic designer and technical director on the production of “Tuck Everlasting.” It’s my third year in Knight Theatre, and every time we put together a production I wonder about the history of musicals on campus. Abbot, do you happen to know what musical was the first hosted at St. Norbert College?

Katy Verheyden '21

Answer:

My dear Katy,

How wonderful to hear from you! I hope I may prevail on you to accompany me on a trip back in time to a 1962 performance of Rick Besoyan’s “Little Mary Sunshine.”

Visualize, if you will be so kind, a humble inn, high in the Rocky Mountains. The proprietress is Little Mary Sunshine, beautifully acted by Rose Gantenbein of the Class of 1966. Our esteemed communication professor Dan Giovannini takes the part of Mary’s foster father, Chief Brown Bear, who sues the United States government with the intent of regaining his traditional territory. Other members of the cast included Wayne Peterson (Class of 1964). Furthermore, I am very happy to say that, as the narrative continues, Chief Brown Bear’s land is returned to him. Dear me, I find myself quite caught up in the story once more.



Ask the Abbot

As the founder of St. Norbert College, and having a prime seat in the center of campus throughout the years, I, Abbot Bernard Pennings, hold the answers to many of your burning questions about the college.

[Submit Your Question](#)

Approximately 800 eager viewers formed the audience for “Little Mary Sunshine.” And this, dear Katy, was St. Norbert College’s first venture into summer music theatre – a practice that, it pleases me to say, would soon become a much-loved and continuing tradition on our campus: a delight for our own campus, and an enthusiastically anticipated treat for our neighbors in the wider community.

I eagerly await our next chance to correspond. Thank you for your inquiry.

Responses to “Ask the Abbot” questions are penned by St. Norbert College staff in the name of Abbot Bernard Pennings, who founded St. Norbert College in 1898.

St. Norbert College

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