Despite the lack of a music room for most of my time at Catherine McAuley I embarked on very ambitious plans to produce a musical nearly every year. I had only produced very small performances in my earlier teaching career and so the musicals were marvellous learning experiences for me and all involved!

Once again, it was the freedom offered by the principals at Catherine McAuley, Sr Mary Anne, Sr Sophie and Sr Edith, which allowed me to indulge my thespian urges! And not to forget the wonderful support, and gentle advice, I received from Sr Agatha and Sr Judith.

My first essay into production came about quite accidentally, when, in 1973, the music teacher at the time decided to put on a number of ‘mini-musicals’. I was given the job of supervising and producing the Year 9 mini-version of ‘Fiddler on the Roof’. I could see immediately the amazing talent lurking behind the pinafores! The production was a great success; we learnt a great deal about Jewish history in Czarist Russia and I identified a number of really wonderful singers and actresses.

All of the mini-productions were performed in the OLMC Hall on one evening. Imagine my chagrin when I realized that our wonderful backdrop of a Russian village, beautifully produced in charcoal, had to be seen with tall snow-capped Swiss mountains from the previous production of ‘Sound of Music’ towering above our Jewish village on the Russian plains! Obviously only a History and Geography teacher would take exception to this pictorial confusion!

However, the following year, having learnt all about the importance of backdrops, I commissioned the wonderfully gifted art teacher, Mr Philipedes, to create the backdrop for ‘HMS Pinafore’. Mr Philipedes was a perfectionist! I obtained a huge piece of calico, which practically covered the whole...
school quadrangle, and Mr Philipedes proceeded
to paint the most wonderful 19th Century
harbourside scene, even to the life-like seagulls
alighting on the quayside, it was a true work of art.
It was even spotted by my husband flying over in
his light aircraft!
The ‘Pinafore’ performances were truly uplifting,
for the performers, for the audience and for the
producer. I was hooked. I hope the students who
participated in this production look back with
huge satisfaction. I will never forget Debbie as
Josephine in her beautiful pink crinoline, Emily
as the Captain, Linda as Ralph Rackstraw, and
the amazing admiral! And the wonderful bevy
of cousins and aunts! How could I forget them
practising their entry, singing with Sr Agatha and
swaying along the upstairs walkway at lunchtime.
And then followed ‘The Boyfriend’, for the first
time held with boys from Marist Brothers. There
were lots of dancing, lots of singing and lots of
fun. All the cast got along really well, not minding
the week-end practices and everyone looking
forward to the three performances and the ‘after’
party. Without a school hall, it was necessary
to borrow Northmead High’s facilities and that
worked well.
Then followed ‘The White Horse Inn’, a little old
fashioned, but needing lots of milk maids, village
boys, goat herders and the like! We had cutout
plywood cows to add to the realism. But most of
all, we had a real life goat! It was beautiful and
white, but it had the most enormous black fleas I’d
ever seen! Poor Joanne Fabri was in charge of the
goat!
However, the following year Joanne was the
most beautiful Burmese princess, Tuptim, in
‘The King and I’; truly the most ambitious of all
productions attempted! Recently I went to see
the Opera House production and I thought, “How
on earth did we pull this off?” It was asking such
a lot from the cast - the costumes, the make-up,
the Asian dancing, to say nothing of the exacting
roles. Needless to say, the leading actors were
superb!
I think that was my last hurrah! An amazingly
complicated production with Siamese dancers’
fingers and sunshades being flown in from Thailand
and goodness knows what else. It was time to
retire!!!

Right, from top:
1. 1975 - Jeanette Sims on the walkway at Open Day
2. 1973 - Fiddler on the Roof
3. 1974 - HMS Pinafore presented by Forms 3 and 4
   in the OLMC auditorium
4. 1975 - The Boyfriend
STUDENT MEMORIES

“In 1974 all of Form 1 was involved in the production of The Pirates of Penzance. Sr Judith Johnson organised it.”

Maria-Luise Sampo nee Cavallaro, 1974 - 1977

“For the King & I my mum made me a huge green skirt and I loved the dancing”.

Cathy Ford, 1972 - 1975

“I was a munchkin in The Wizard of Oz and I was also in HMS Pinafore. We had a great time”,

Meredith Robinson nee Buckley 1971 - 1974

“I just loved performing in The Sound of Music after so many try outs in previous years! I was the middle daughter.”

Therese Walmsley

“A highlight of my school life was performing in The Pirates of Penzance in Form 1 1974.”

Judith Cowley 1974 - 1977

“I have wonderful memories of Mrs Sims and I performed in many of the musicals.”

Vivienne Caruana

“For the Sound of Music I wore my purple hot pants, the closest I could get to Austrian clothing! I was the oldest son, Friedrich: all part of going to a girls’ high school with no boys to play the male roles.”

Catherine Lowman, 1972 - 1975

“The King and I” musical was an awesome production; I played one of the King’s children.”

Angela Cranson

“I remember the musicals quite well. A special one in particular, where I had stitches in my knee, and Sr Barbara insisting I kneel down and of course the stitches burst and I had to be carried out taken to the hospital and re-stitched!!”

Margaret Cassar 1970 - 1973

Right, from top:
1. 1976 - The White Horse Inn
2. 1976 - The Boyfriend
3. 1977 - The King and I
4. 1979 - Miss Shuettrim’s production of The Gondoliers