

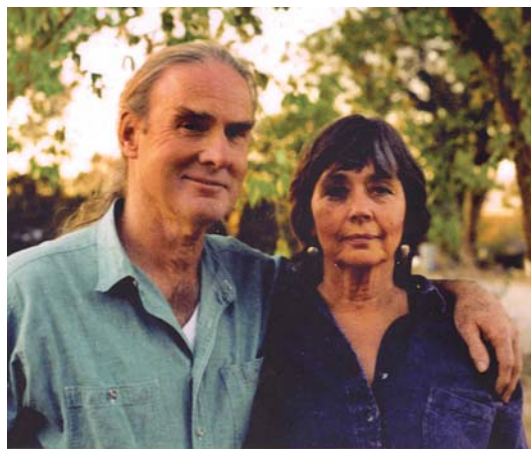


What do you do when you find yourself with an abundance of apples? Make applesauce! If you have lots of lemons? Make lemonade! And so forth. Season XII of Angel Fire Mountain Theatre could be summed up with a multitude of metaphors, but the one which works best involves pulling a rabbit from a hat and making – what else – magic!

With the unfortunate and untimely cancellation of scheduled performances by long-time partner Texas Tech University School of Theatre and Dance just weeks prior to the Season XII opening night, Katherine McDermott and the AFMT board found a hat and immediately began looking for a rabbit to pull from it. Finding willing and able live theatre groups and individuals to step into the void wasn't an easy task, but find them they did, magic happened; and, *Voila!* the show will go on!

So who ARE these new folks? They are the "rabbits" which the Angel Fire Mountain Theatre board found in their hat. Thanks to their willingness and generosity of both talent and spirit, AFMT is having Season XII magic!

Kristen Woolf, Bjorn Halvorsen, Bruce McIntosh, Jane Ayles and their friends are all dedicated theatre professionals from across the pass in Taos! After puzzling about what a retired couple could do if they didn't play golf or bridge or have grandchildren living nearby, Bjorn and Kristen decided they could do something they had each wanted to do since they were teenagers – in this case, start a theater.



Bjorn Halvorsen and Kristen Woolf

While living in New York as a teenager, Bjorn stumbled into the Living Theatre and realized he had found something he loved, but life (having a family and earning a living) made its demands; and so he put his dream on hold – for 50 years!

Kristen Woolf was born to parents involved in theater in Salt Lake City. She always thought she would act, but instead found herself involved in singing, eventually singing opera while raising her three sons.

When Bjorn and Kristen met, it was over conversations about the theater and their love of it. They both were involved with Bruce McIntosh's Metta Theatre in Taos, where Bruce was producing good theater with work lights and folding chairs – and good actors. Bjorn and Kristen married in 2000, and by 2004 both had retired – Bjorn from household moving and Kristen from teaching. Kristen produced several opera performances using Bruce's light touch, learning what it takes to create exciting performances: performers, great material and an audience. These experiences were lessons in how to produce shows.

Since opening The Space Theatre Company in Taos a little over a year ago, Bjorn and Kristen have produced or hosted more than ten shows. The first show was *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me* by Frank McGuinness, directed by recent Angel Fire newcomer, Jane Ayles. It was late June and Solar Fest was happening at the same time. After working hard to get the show together, they were amazed when during the first performance, temperatures in the theater soared due to the audience body heat and full-on theater lights. Nothing like this had happened in rehearsal! Patrons were wonderful – and so was the play! Their daytimes were spent making "cold packs" for the patrons and trying to arrange to have air conditioning up and running before the play ended. Fortunately, the play took place in Lebanon, so the sweltering heat could be construed to be part of the mood. And the day after the show closed, a big swamp cooler was finally installed!

"I believe in live theater with a live audience," Kristen said. "People will always need to come together and share in the performer-audience experience. And there are so many wonderful plays! Our next show was billed as being for stepparents and their kids and everybody else – a wonderful play called *Step On A Crack* by Susan Zeder that tells the story of how a little girl learns to let her widowed father's new wife into her life and become her mom. *Step On a Crack* was followed by a reading of local writer Fabi Romero's play *We Don't Speak Ohio, No?* about life in Northern New Mexico from the inside out. By that time," Kristen said, "we felt we were off and running."

When Bjorn and Kristen started making their plans, people counseled them to move slowly and plan carefully, but as Bjorn said, "You know what? I'm 72. I really don't have time to wait!"

Jane Ayles, director and producer of several of the shows being performed in Angel Fire, then approached Kristen about acting in A.R. Gurney's *The Dining Room*, which, after a successful run in Taos in May, is one of the plays being performed in Angel Fire this summer. "You don't want me, Jane," Kristen insisted. "My stage experience is mostly in Opera. I don't think I can do it." "Yes you can," said Ayles. "Well, Kristen reluctantly agreed, "if you promise me that you will be honest and if I'm just terrible, you'll tell me . . ." "I promise," said Ayles. And the rest is now making Angel Fire history.

Angel Fire Mountain Theatre is also extremely fortunate to have secured the generous services of veteran theater professional Bruce McIntosh. Before founding and heading Metta Theatre, a non-profit based in Taos, Bruce trained as an actor at The Neighborhood Playhouse in New York City, appeared on stages throughout the United States and was nominated for a Helen Hayes Award as outstanding lead actor. He also acts in films, most recently *Swing Vote* and *Project Angel*. His plays have been produced in Los Angeles and Taos, and his screenwriting credits include *Final*, directed by Campbell Scott, starring Denis Leary and Hope Davis.

Mining talent closer to home, Bruce recently enlisted Bjorn Halvorsen to appear as the Judge in Metta Theatre's production of *The Catonsville Nine* by Daniel Berrigan. During the past year at Taos High School, Bruce volunteered to work with drama students – some of the talented actors gracing the Angel Fire Mountain Theatre stage this summer are among the many fine young people he met there.

Angel Fire Mountain Theatre is delighted to welcome these new friends, all dedicated professionals who generously jumped in the hat to give Season XII more than a little bit of magic!

