

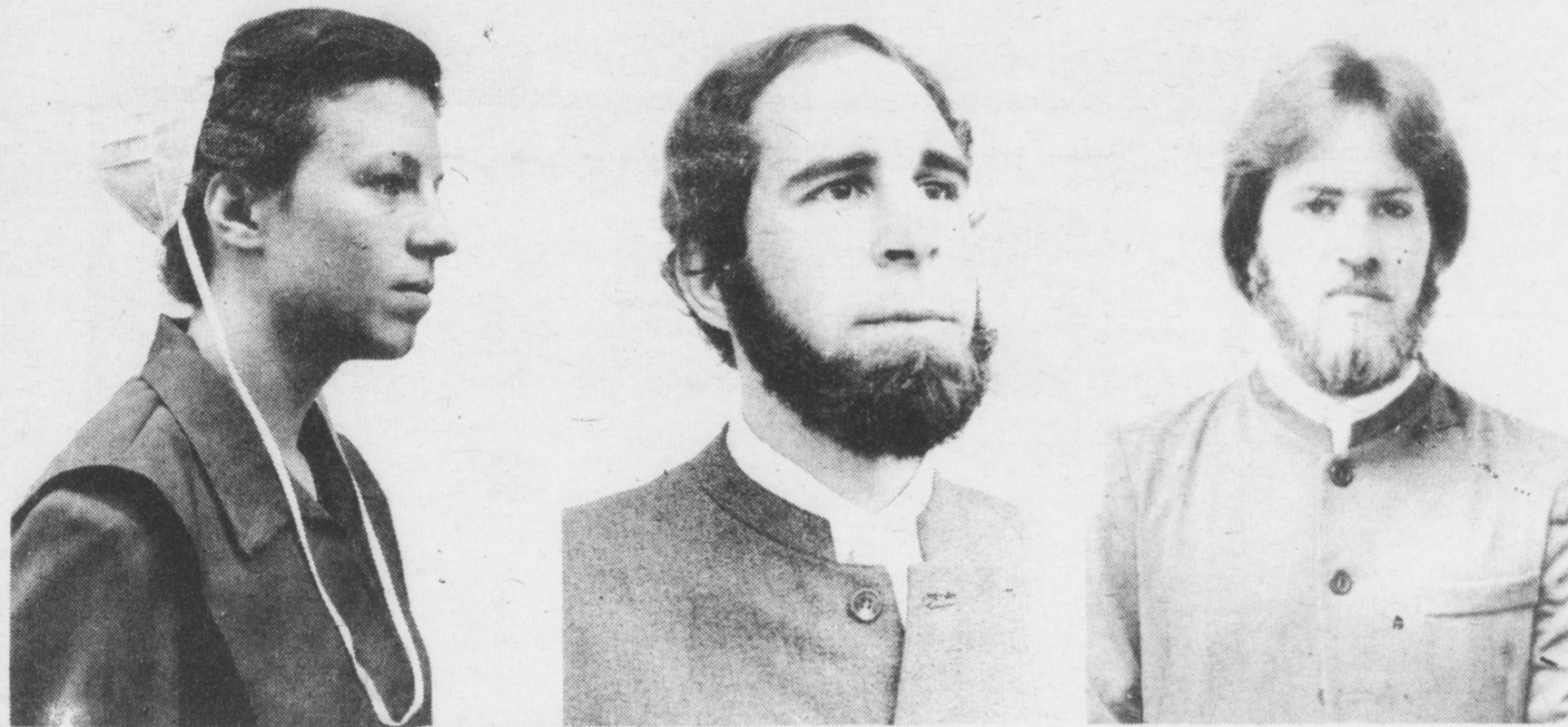
SUSQUEHANNA

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From left to right, in the "plain" costumes they wore for the play are: Sabina Frey, Eugene Mellinger and Jay Musser.

Drama about local events at Messiah College

Pilgrimage, the story of the River Brethren

by John E. Rivermoore

Three residents of the Mount Joy and Marietta area participated last week in what this reviewer considers the most original and authentic drama he has witnessed in the Pennsylvania-Dutch area.

Unlike most locally produced theatricals, this drama was no re-play of a Broadway hit. It was a play that grew as naturally out of our soil as the crops that are greening all around us and that flowed as naturally and smoothly in its unfolding plot, as the Conoy Creek on its happy way to the Susquehanna River.

The drama, entitled, *Pilgrimage*, was written and directed by Norman A. Bert, who teaches drama at Messiah College, where the pageant was presented to full houses on three separate nights last week. Bert, who employed many techniques of modern theater in depicting the 200-year history of the Brethren in Christ church, has, I think, produced a truly indigenous Pennsylvania-German epic drama.

The three local actors who appeared in *Pilgrimage* were: Sabina Frey, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John K. Frey, 124 S. River

St., Maytown, a member of the Brethren chorus in the play; Eugene T. Mellinger, son of Mr. and Mrs. Harold H. Mellinger, R.D. 1, Mount Joy, also a member of the Brethren chorus; and Jay R. Musser, son of Mrs. Ruth D. Musser, R.D. 1, Mount Joy, who played the role of one of the founders of the Brethren, Jacob Engle, and then successively took on the roles of subsequent leaders in the church.

Sabina, Gene, and Jay, like all the other actors in *Pilgrimage*, are amateurs who gave flawless performances. The pageant began and was sustained throughout by an excitement and enthusiasm that never lagged. No professional actors could possibly have done as well as these actors, who are part and parcel of the traditions they were portraying.

Although the pageant was most directly about the successive parochial crises that threatened at times to shatter the Brethren—the erection of meeting houses, the founding of Sunday Schools, sponsoring foreign missions, building orphanages and schools, revivalism, and the shedding of "plain" garments—Bert presented these local con-

cerns against a universal background, so that non-Brethren members of the audience, like myself, were thoroughly caught up in the drama.

Throughout the play, contrast is provided by an ever-hovering chorus of the "world" who absorbedly watch the crises of the tiny sect. Their "gay" costumes are starkly different from the "plain" garb of the Brethren. On occasion, the "world" intrudes rudely into the lives of the simple Brethren, altering them.

Projection screens high above the action, provided a continuous background in words and pictures of what was transpiring in the world at large while the Brethren wrestled with one problem after another.

The only props used in the show were wooden boxes about the size of grocery cartons, which the cast from time to time rearranged, to shut out the "world," or to let it in.

The same actors portraying the history of the church over its entire 200-year history, easily switched to new roles in each epoch, adding continuity to the historical development.

Background music (piccolo, piano/organ, percussion, and violin) unobtrusively reinforced action on the stage.

The very human nature of the Brethren portrayed by the actors raised this play above a mere sectarian piece and made it, fundamentally, a play about humanity.

Without distracting from the deep seriousness of the Brethren's concerns, the play contained much good fun, a good bit of it at the expense of the Brethren, judging from the hearty laughs from the audience. The Brethren in Christ have an endearing and healthy ability to laugh at themselves.

All the various theatrical techniques and the varying moods were masterfully integrated by Bert into a well orchestrated unity, with a powerful cumulative effect on the audience.

I left Messiah College with a strong admiration for this church, its roots deep in the past, changing and adapting to the times, keeping the loyalty and fervor of its young people, the actors in this drama, while retaining its essential "peculiarity" which is its purity that sets it off from the "world."

Candy Flowers wins tri-state roller skating competition



Candy Flowers

On the 4th of July, eight year-old Candy Flowers of Marietta won the Eastern Regional Division Roller Skating-Figure skating championship at Elsmere, Delaware. This means that, as far as the U.S. Amateur Confederation of Roller Skating is concerned, Candy is the best figure skater under nine years old in the states of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware.

On July 30, Candy will travel to Lincoln, Nebraska, for a shot at the United States championship.

Candy's parents, Charles and Dolores Flowers of 526 W. Market Street, Marietta, put her on roller skates for the first time when she was eight months old, and let her enter her first competition when she was one and a half years old. Candy practices on her

skates for about 20 hours each week, in Park City. (She can't skate on the sidewalk, because the rough surface would nick the wheels of her expensive skates.)

All this experience has given her plenty of confidence: "The other kids are nervous before a competition," she says, "but I'm not. I know that I'm the one they have to beat."

She is so supremely self-confident, in fact, that when she and her partner were knocked down during a roller skating dance competition, Candy was not at all embarrassed. "We couldn't help it that we had a collision with another person," she says. "It

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