

CAROLINE MONOLOGUES

PART 1

Introductions: Personal Connection or Anecdote

JANE: I'm Jane Weimer Godwin. I first met Caroline when I was in high school and wanted to take voice lessons. Caroline assigned me to one of her students instead, but several years later I studied voice with Caroline during my final year at Wesleyan. Over the years we performed together in the Larry Parsons Chorale and Buckhannon Choral Society, presented two joint recitals of art songs and duets, shared rides to concerts, and enjoyed food and friendship with the Tuesday Lunch Bunch Ladies.

During my last phone call with Caroline, which lasted over two hours, as usual, we covered a variety of topics. We made tentative plans to get together for tea, though we didn't get the chance to follow through. But as we were reminiscing a bit, I reminded Caroline about a post-concert or show party at my house a few blocks from here when I was a newlywed. The party ran late, but the last guest to leave--by far--was Caroline at 4:00 a.m. She hugged me goodbye, then took the face of my shy sleepy husband, David, in her hands and firmly planted a big one on his lips. Caroline claimed she didn't recall that happening, but I promised her that David would never forget it.

(Introductions of other Reader's Theater participants, Sarah Carr Parsons, Don Gardner, and Dave Carson)

JANE:

As is to be expected in our technological world today, many heartfelt tributes to Caroline were expressed on social media and shared through messages. We decided to put the comments together and present them in the style of a Reader's Theater, which is fitting because of Caroline's love of theater. So here are the contributions from you: friends, colleagues, former students, and fellow performers.

1: THE WORLD ACCORDING TO CAROLINE

JANE: The following are comments and rules for better living attributed to Caroline by those who knew her well.

SARAH: Life is better with a jar of lemon drops on your desk at all times, in case of emergencies.

DON: Don't call before 10:00 a.m. Ever.

DAVE: Hydrate!

SARAH: Wear a scarf to keep your throat warm.

DON: Don't cough; swallow instead.

JANE: Sing with gum tucked in your mouth where no one can see it.

DAVE: With talent and practice, one can do the following: play a piano well, make great fried chicken, and make a cat come when you whistle.

DON: Speaking of whittling, in choir rehearsal, why not give your voice a rest and whistle your part instead?

SARAH: Collard greens can be good from a can, but plums taste best if they come from Caroline's grandma's tree.

JANE: Fruit punch should be made with a little Southern Comfort.

DAVE: It's "Caroline," [short "i"] not "Caroline" [long "i"]

FUN TIMES AT CAROLINE'S HOUSE

DON: Caroline opened her home to others for many things, including Sigma Alpha Iota, or porch sales, pasta dinners while watching operas, and late night concerts on her deck.

JANE: And there were the Christmas parties, complete with Caroline at the piano and everyone singing carols, plus being handed an ornament that told you which of the 12 Days of Christmas was your solo part for the evening. No pressure.

SARAH: I will always cherish the nights after Buckhannon Community Theatre rehearsals when we would hang out at her house in the summertime.

DAVE: I remember listening to cast records at her home. She served Budweiser tallboys.

DON: I remember parting in a few of those tallboys.

DAVE: During those shows, she was always there to share her expertise and her home for late-night chats. She coaxed me into trying okra. The beers and conversations were plenty.

THE LAUGH

SARAH: According to many people, Caroline's laugh was iconic. Here is what they said about it.

DON and JANE: Unforgettable

SARAH and DAVE: Melodious

JANE: A laugh I could never forget.

DAVE: Love her laugh.

DON: What a great laugh.

SARAH: Infectious laugh.

JANE: I'm fairly certain I aggravated her more than I made her laugh.

DAVE: She could do a stage laugh, couldn't she!!!

JANE: I remember her teaching me how to do a stage laugh.

SARAH: She taught me how to laugh in arpeggios!

DON: That laugh was infamous.

DAVE: It was a vibrant laugh.

DON: It was distinctive.

JANE: She did have a “soprano” laugh.

DAVE: She was so jolly.

DON: I remember that laugh so well--especially from LA TRAVIATA and other operas with the WV Symphony Orchestra, and the whistling, just as high and clear as her laughter.

SARAH: That laugh lives on with warmth in my heart.

[They then invited the gathered crowd to all try Caroline’s laugh....what a wonderful sound.]

I Hate Music! (Leonard Bernstein)

JANE: I

DON: hate

DAVE: music!

SARAH: But I like to sing (La, dee da da dee; la dee da dee)

DAVE: But that’s not music! Not what I call music, no sir!

DON: Music is a lot of men in a lot of tails - Making music like a lot of females

JANE: Music is a lot of folks in a big dark hall - Where they really don’t want to be at all

DON: With a lot of chairs

JANE: and a lot of heirs

DAVE: and a lot of furs and diamonds!

SARAH: Music is silly!

JANE: I

DON: hate

DAVE: music!

SARAH: But I like to sing
 La dee da da dee;
 La dee da dee;
 La dee da dee.

THE VOICE

JANE: Despite the title, Leonard Bernstein's "I Hate Music" is a song that Caroline loved to sing. We didn't have a recording of her singing it to share today, but we're sure you can picture her channeling her inner 10-year-old to bring the song to life. Her voice was quite distinctive and she shared that talent in solo and choral singing both near and far. Here are a few things that folks had to say about her special gift.

DAVE: After a summer BCT rehearsal of THE MUSIC MAN, in which Caroline played the mother of Marian the Librarian, there was a Karaoke night going on at the 88 Restaurant. After watching a number of drunken performances of Journey tunes, Caroline got up and delivered "Danny Boy." Never saw a place so quiet and moved by a performance--and not a likely audience.

DON: She had a way of just standing there and singing.

JANE: What a beautiful voice and lady.

SARAH: I always enjoyed singing next to her at Buckhannon Choral Society rehearsals. She made everything look easy.

DON: When she was singing a solo for concert Chorale, I remember Larry telling her to sing like the diva she was!

DAVE: Her voice is the only voice I knew that ever set the Chapel rafters shaking. She filled that space and then some.

JANE: She had both gift and craft. Hers was the female voice that was my benchmark for all others.

SARAH: She blessed so many with her vocal talents and joy of singing.

DAVE: such a gorgeous voice and gentle soul.

PART TWO

CAROLINE: THE PERSON

DAVE: Exactly who was Caroline? One friend said caring--and a bit crazy.

SARAH: She was a good teacher and a great person.

DON: She was one-of-a-kind and loved being that way.

DAVE: She was incredibly patient and kind.

DON: She believed whole-heartedly in all her students, no matter what their perceived talent.

DAVE: She helped transform a stage fright-stricken beginner barely surviving a first studio recital, to a capable, confident performer fit for post-graduate study.

JANE: Wicked sense of humor.

SARAH: Wonderful woman.

DAVE: So talented.

DON: Certainly a character.

JANE: An original.

SARAH: I adored her.

CAROLINE: THE TEACHER

DON: The majority of the tributes received were comments on Caroline's role as a teacher and the lasting effect on her students. She taught private vocal and class vocal studies, humanities,

diction, opera workshop, and Caroline also served as a faculty sponsor for a science fiction club, as she herself was an avid reader of sci-fi.

JANE: Miss Dees was a sweet part of my WVWC music education in the 70s. She was delightful, gifted, professional, and took a personal interest in her students. Her life impacted countless students.

DAVE: She was demanding, talented, interested in teaching and learning, jovial, scholarly, and just plain fun to be around.

SARAH: She started a chapter of the first music fraternity for women on campus, Sigma Alpha Iota, and our chapter was first called the Hemidemisemiquavers.

DON: I'll always remember Caroline for introducing me to many operas and furthering my love of the arts.

DAVE: I have several life-lessons I carry with me from Miss Dees.

SARAH: She was patient as I learned how to blend, breathe, and develop standards for healthy, beautiful singing. She was also the first to call me out when I was unprepared or not memorized on time.

DAVE: She indeed was a positive and professional presence on campus.

JANE: She was a kind and encouraging lady who truly loved her students.

SARAH: She never stopped learning and loving and giving of herself to her colleagues, students, and WVWC. The passion and joy in her studio pulled every ounce of stumbling skill and commitment you walked in with and gave it back to you tenfold. Because she believed in you, it became easier to believe in yourself.

DON: The day I left her studio for the last time, she said, "Just keep singing." I did that and because of her, I had the privilege of singing with both the Mendelssohn Choir and the Bach Choir of Pittsburgh, as well as traveling to Europe with Larry's groups. I have had a great life as a music teacher, organist, accompanist, and singer, because of the training I received under Caroline, Larry, Dr. Loftis, and Dave Milburn. You all gave me a gift I can share with others for the rest of my life.

DAVE: Is there any better compliment to a teacher than the grateful love of her students? Caroline touched and influenced so many with her talents, her impressive pedagogical knowledge, and most of all, her huge heart and personality. She was such a large part of so many of her students' lives, including my own. She will be missed, but always loved.

