

Willpower

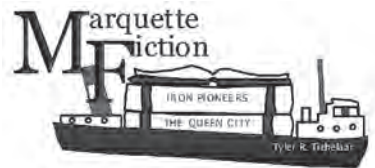
An Original Play
about Marquette's Ossified Man

Written by Tyler R. Tichelaar

with Literary Passages by Will S. Adams

Directed by Moire Embley

Musical Direction by Jeff Bruning



Marquette Fiction
Marquette, Michigan

Willpower: An Original Play

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ISBN-13: 978-0-9962400-0-0
ISBN-10: 0-9962400-0-0

Library of Congress Control Number: 2015904936

Printed in the United States of America
Cover Image: Corey Sustarich
Interior Layout & Design: Larry Alexander
Publication managed by Superior Book Productions
www.SuperiorBookProductions.com

“Don’t call me a cripple when you write your story, and don’t say I am bedridden. I don’t like those expressions. They put a fellow down too hard. And I’m not so badly off, you know. I’m not so badly off, old chap. Had it been otherwise, I might have become the subject of a trust investigation committee or a bank president. And I’d rather be literary than sordid any day.”

— Will S. Adams, upon being interviewed by a reporter from the
Detroit Free Press in 1906

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Note: The historic images on the lefthand pages before each scene are the photographic backdrops that were projected onto the stage during the performance. They are reproduced courtesy of the Marquette Regional History Center.

Production Notes

Willpower was first produced by the Marquette Regional History Center at Kaufman Auditorium in Marquette, Michigan, on September 18 & 19, 2014, with help from major grants from the Michigan Humanities Council, Upper Peninsula Health Plan, and Marquette County Community Foundation. Special thanks are also due to Forest Roberts Theatre, Westwood Shakespeare Company and B.G. Bradley, Marquette Senior High School, Lake Superior Youth Theatre, Messiah Lutheran Church, Bay Cliff Health Camp, Jim’s Music, Marquette Arts & Culture Center, Togo’s, Pride Printing, Corey Sustarich, Scott Taylor, and the J.M. Longyear Research Library.

The *Willpower* logo/front cover artwork was designed by Corey Sustarich. The sketched characters around the image were drawn by Will Adams and the photos are from the J.M. Longyear Research Library. They include Norma Ross, Sidney Adams, Harriet Adams, and Bertha Adams

Directors & Crew

Moire Embley..... Director
Moire Embley..... Technical Design
Jim Pennell Sound & Light Design
Jeff BruningOriginal Composition & Musical Direction
Suzanne Shahbazi Costume Design
Jalina Olgren Stage Manager
Anna LaBrecheAssistant Stage Manager
Megan HillierPower Point Operator
Ben Hafer..... Spot Operator
Kristen Ilves-Anderson..... Hair Design
Shannon Jackson Hair Design

Cast in Order of Appearance

Fred Rydholm Dave Dagenais
Norma Ross (senior)..... Jessica “Red” Bays
Grace Ross (senior & adult) Monica Nordeen

| | |
|--|---|
| Mather Hall Soloist..... | Patrick Leo Bradley |
| Will S. Adams (child)..... | Truman Durand |
| Norma Ross (child)..... | Iris Oswald |
| Grace Ross (child)..... | Senia Manson |
| Children’s Choir..... | Tia Anderson, Ryleigh Jackson, Emma Bradley, Gabrielle Langston, Elizabeth King, Truman Durand, Hunter Trepanier, Senia Manson, Jeremiah Ogawa, Iris Oswald, Porter Bays, Emma Spade, & Ladyn Spade |
| Elsie..... | Endla Harris |
| Minnie..... | Tia Anderson |
| Nellie..... | Ryleigh Jackson |
| Mary..... | Emma Bradley |
| Ernie Ludlow (child)..... | Jeremiah Ogawa |
| Joe..... | Hunter Trepanier |
| Mrs. Ludlow & Harriet Adams..... | Tiina Harris |
| Bertha Adams Beard..... | Allison Hyttinen |
| Dr. James Dawson..... | Anthony Pruett |
| Will S. Adams (adult)..... | Andy Vanwelsenaers |
| Norma Ross (adult)..... | Sara Parks |
| Dr. Eldred Robbins (Colonel Foster)..... | Troy Graham |
| T.E. “Ernie” Ludlow (Lord Breakus)..... | Anthony Pruett |
| Lillian Russell..... | Isabel Francis |
| Telegram Delivery Boy..... | Porter Bays |
| Rev. Bates Burt..... | Martyn Martello |

Understudies

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Norma Ross (child)..... | Ryleigh Jackson |
| Grace Ross (child)..... | Tia Anderson |
| Will S. Adams (child)..... | Hunter Trepanier |
| Ernie Ludlow (child)..... | Porter Bays |



Fred Rydholm giving Norma Ross her award. Photo from *The Mining Journal*, November 5, 1963.

WILLPOWER

ACT I

Scene 1: Kaufman Auditorium, Marquette, Michigan, October 1963

[The curtain is down. Fred Rydholm, age thirty-nine and dressed as Mr. Lundie from *Brigadoon*, steps through the curtain with an award plaque in his hand.]

Fred: Welcome, ladies and gentleman. Tonight, we have a special treat for you. We are presenting the popular Broadway musical *Brigadoon*. As many of you know, I'm Fred Rydholm, and I will be playing the town of Brigadoon's local storyteller, Mr. Lundie, a role I'm told I'm well fitted for. But first, as Mayor of Marquette, it is my great honor to announce that this opening night performance is dedicated to someone very special to many of us in Marquette—Miss Norma Ross. Norma, I know you're out there in the audience somewhere. Would you come up on stage for a minute?

[Applause as Norma, in her eighties, comes up on stage, assisted by her sister Grace. Norma walks up to Fred and bows to the audience.]

Fred: In case there is anyone out there who doesn't know, Norma is retired from the Marquette Public Schools where she spent forty-four years as a music teacher, leading the school choirs, and starting the first orchestra. She's also been heavily involved in community music and theater productions and her church choir. And not only was she my music teacher in school, but she was my father's music teacher. And I bet most of you in this room tonight had her as your music teacher. It might not even be too much to say that we wouldn't be performing this wonderful production of *Brigadoon* tonight if it weren't for Norma's commitment to keeping music an integral part of this community. Therefore, the City Commission of Marquette has adopted a resolution to honor Miss Norma Ross for her...well, I better read it so I don't mess it up. [He lifts up the plaque to read it.] For her "unselfish and dedicated devotion to the children of our community in the training and development of their musical talent and music appreciation, thereby in part being responsible for the many excellent musical programs which the people in this area have enjoyed over a period of many years."

[Fred hands the award to Norma as the crowd applauds.]

Norma: Thank you, Fred, and I'm glad to see that despite all my efforts, the director, Mrs. Lasich, was smart enough not to give you a singing role in *Brigadoon*. [Laughter from everyone. Fred's laughter is the loudest.] What can I say except to thank you profusely and to tell you all that it has been my

pleasure to be a part of this community and champion its music programs. Music has been what has kept me going all these years. The great blessing and privilege of my life has been the opportunity to pass it on to others. I also had one great inspiration. How I wish you were here with me tonight, Will Adams. You helped so much to make music and literature and theatre a strong part of this community. I thank you all for both of us, and I hope music remains a part of this community long after I'm gone.

[Norma and Grace begin to walk back to their seats.]

Fred: Thank you, Norma. And now the Marquette Community Theatre is proud to present *Brigadoon!*

[Fred exits through the curtain.]

Grace: (turning to her sister) Norma, Father would be so proud of you. He helped bring music and theatre to Marquette, but you've helped keep it alive all these years.

Norma: Well, I had a lot of help. I remember first meeting Will at Father's theatre as if it were only yesterday.



Marquette's Graveraet School includes Kaufman Auditorium (right wing) and the Sidney Adams Gymnasium (left wing). Kaufman Auditorium was named for Louis Kaufman, brother to Mayor Nathan Kaufman, whom Will draws in the play. The auditorium is where Norma Ross received her award during the production of *Brigadoon*. It's also where *Willpower* premiered. According to Fred Rydholm in *Superior Heartland*, Harriet Adams donated the land for the gymnasium on the condition that it be named for her late husband.





Exterior of Mather Hall



Marquette Opera House interior used as Mather Hall interior in *Willpower*

Scene 2: Mather Hall, Mr. Ross's Theatre, 1892

[Will, age fourteen, has sneaked into the theatre. He is hiding backstage, watching a singer perform the end of "After the Ball."]

Singer:

A little maiden climbed an old man's knee,
Begged for a story—"Do, Uncle, please.
Why are you single; why live alone?
Have you no babies; have you no home?"
"I had a sweetheart years, years ago;
Where she is now pet, you will soon know.
List to the story, I'll tell it all,
I believed her faithless after the ball."

After the ball is over,
After the break of morn—
After the dancers' leaving;
After the stars are gone;
Many a heart is aching,
If you could read them all;
Many the hopes that have vanished
After the ball.

[As the song ends, Norma and Grace, her younger sister, approach Will.]

Norma: (tapping Will on the shoulder and whispering) You can't be back here.

[Will turns around, embarrassed, but trying to joke his way out of the situation. His manner is grandiose, confident, but not off-putting.]

Will: (speaking boldly rather than whispering) Ah, but you see, there's where you're wrong. You say I can't be back here, but I am here, so it is possible. I *can* be back here.

Norma: I mean, no audience members are allowed backstage.

Will: But how am I to become a famous playwright if I don't know what goes on backstage? I'm sure you wouldn't want to be remembered as the girl who thwarted a great playwright's future by tattling on me, now would you?

[Norma looks taken aback by his verbosity and confidence, but Grace is unimpressed.]

Grace: Did you sneak in? My father owns this theatre, and if you snuck in, you're going to be in trouble.

Will: But I've already seen the play from the seats, so I thought I'd get a different perspective of it from behind the scenes. To be a playwright, I need to know everything about a play and not just what the public sees.

Grace: You don't have permission to be back here.

Norma: (softer and feeling a bit dazzled) You want to be a playwright?

Will: I do, and don't you think it's fitting? After all, the great Bard of Stratford-on-Avon and I share the same name.

Grace: What? The bard of what?

Norma: Grace, I think he means Shakespeare. [She turns to Will.] So I guess that means your name is William?

Will: Just Will to my friends, and I can tell we are going to be fine friends when a lovely lady like yourself understands so well my frame of mind.

Norma: (suddenly realizing to whom she's speaking) Oh, I know who you are. You're Will Adams. I've heard you sing in the boys choir at St. Paul's. You have a beautiful voice.

Will: Thank you. But with all due respect to the Creator, I believe singing hymns limits me, which is why I secretly wish to write a musical comedy.

Norma: Oh, that's wonderful. I love musical theatre, especially operettas. They're very romantic.

Will: Then, my dear, just to please you, I shall make it an operetta. I will make it light and humorous and full of beautiful music that makes one's heart soar.

Grace: The play being performed right now is a musical comedy, but that song "After the Ball" isn't a happy one.

Will: It is bittersweet, yes, but it has truth in it. People who chase after love are bound to have their hearts broken, yet I confess I am a romantic myself.

Norma: I think love is grand. And I've often thought that the need to express one's love is what first made people create music.

Will: Spoken like a poetess, my dear, although you are far too young to know anything about falling in love. [He bends and kisses her hand and she laughs.]

Grace: (shocked) I'm going to tell Father. He won't like that, Norma. You're too young to have a beau.

Norma: Hush, Grace. We're just playacting.

Will: I hope not. Acting is a serious business, and so is love, or so I've been told.

Grace: Shh, the next act is starting. [She peers through the curtain at the stage.]

Will: I'm afraid I must be going. I have to be home by dark, but I thank you for not tattling on me.

Norma: Oh, you have to stay for the next act. It's hilarious.

Will: I've already seen all the things I can love for one evening. Good night.

Norma: Wait. When will I see you again? I mean, maybe we could sing together some time. I also sing in my church choir.

Will: That, my dear, would be magnificent—to hear you sing, I mean. I will look forward to it and trust that the stars will cross properly so as to bring it about.

[As he starts to leave, Norma notices that he limps.]

Norma: Oh, did you hurt yourself?

Will: Just a little baseball injury. It's nothing. Should be all healed in a day or two. Good night.

Grace: (sourly) Good night.

Norma: Oh, Grace, isn't he nice? And he's both artistic and athletic.

Grace: (loudly) He's no account, Norma, if he sneaks into theatres.

Norma: Shh, the audience might hear you. Besides, he's the mayor's son, you know.

Grace: (rolling her eyes) Then he should know better.