

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Gus Gordon

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Tumultuous 2020 Oral History project

Interview # T20-A-L-2021-052

Gus Gordon, executive director of the Hoogland Center for the Arts, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Tumultuous 2020* Oral History project.

Interview date & location:

Date: October 20, 2021 Location: ALPL Recording Studio, Springfield, IL

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Amanda Riggenbach, Tumultuous 2020 project manager ALPLM

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 2:32 / 2.53 hrs.

Transcript being
processed.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on November 16, 2021.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

© 2021 Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

Abstract

Gus Gordon, *Tumultuous 2020*, T20-A-L-2021-052

Biographical Information/Overview of Interview: Gus Gordon was born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1965. He grew up in the suburbs of Cincinnati and attended Indian Hill High School. His sophomore year he auditioned for *A Christmas Carol* and was selected for a role. There, he found a community that would change his life—even post-graduation in 1983. His pursuit of broadcasting at the University of Cincinnati kept him in close proximity to the College-Conservatory of Music, where the theater department was housed. After graduation in 1987, Gordon pursued a variety of positions in broadcasting as a weatherman, eventually ending up in Springfield, Illinois. He soon married his wife, Claire Gordon, and what was meant to be a temporary move became home to the both of them.

Gordon became involved with the Hoogland Performing Arts Center early in its inception. Initially he was the artistic director on a part time basis, while still working as a broadcaster. In 2012 he took a self-described leap of faith and accepted the position of executive director. With his background in theater, broadcasting, as well as starting and running a production company (Gordon Production), Gordon was well suited to the role. In March of 2020 the Hoogland was forced to shut its doors to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Gordon describes the anxiety of not knowing how long the Hoogland could stay afloat without any income. Despite being faced with all the difficulties associated with the shut-down, Gordon expressed his amazement and gratitude towards the community that showed up with extremely generous donations. One family donated 300,000 dollars to replace the failing heating and cooling systems in the 100-year-old building.

The Hoogland also worked to offer online shows and embraced creative thinking in order to keep all safe. *A Christmas Carol* was performed via Zoom, with the actors each in their own homes. Since June of 2021, when the state moved into Phase 5 of pandemic mitigations, the Hoogland has slowly expanded in-person offerings. After eighteen months of closed doors, the Hoogland reopened officially in September of 2021 for in-person shows.

Subject Headings/Key Words: COVID-19 pandemic; performing arts; community theater; pandemic's effect on performing arts; Hoogland Performing Arts Center.

Notes to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

COPYRIGHT

The following material can be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes without the written permission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. These materials are not to be deposited in other repositories, nor used for resale or commercial purposes without the authorization from the Audio-Visual Curator at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 112 N. 6th Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701. Telephone (217) 785-7955