

1787 the Musical – Development History
June, 2013

In 1993, Robert Picklesimer acted in a local production of *1776* and began to consider that a musical about the writing of the Constitution of the United States might have merit. In 1996 he founded *The Creative Dramatics Workshop* through which he has produced more than 80 shows, including a variety of original scripts. In 1999 Catherine Drinker Bowen's book, *Miracle at Philadelphia*, prompted him to continue his study of the history and development of several more ideas for the *1787* story. In 2005, when he approached Lucinda Lawrence, of the University of Illinois School of Music, she likewise found the project compelling and was excited to join as musical collaborator.

Using styles from operetta to barbershop, from gospel to rock-and-roll, beautiful ballads, and catchy up-tempo tunes, Lawrence developed original music for this script, augmented with some adaptations, musical quotes, period music, and parodies. Lawrence and Picklesimer collaborated in all aspects of the story, script, lyrics, and music in this work, appealing to a contemporary audience in the genre of classic American Musical Theatre, and which received kudos from musicians and amateurs alike.

In 2009, the University of Illinois Division of Opera performed a semi-staged concert of 10 of the songs, with brief narration providing the story, directed by Dawn Harris, conducted by Chet Alwes, at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts. With many invited readings, cuts, and edits, the full premiere was produced mid-summer, 2011, at the historic 1500-seat Virginia Theatre in Champaign, Illinois, produced by *The Creative Dramatics Workshop*, directed by Leonard Rumery, music directed by Aaron Kaplan. Based on the success and standing ovations for that production, the collaborators have made minor – nonstructural – edits to refine the work to the current version and now collaborate in promoting the work to producers and others involved in new musical theatre.