

# Vonnegut told this Cape Codder to 'do something' with his unproduced play. See it Oct. 4-5



**Susan Vaughn**

Cape Cod Times

[Kurt Vonnegut's](#) lost — and then found — unproduced play will be performed at [Eventide Theatre](#) in Dennis Oct. 4 and 5.

The yellowed typewritten manuscript was in a worn, overstuffed binder along with other memorabilia from the former Orleans Arena Theatre.

“I pulled it out of a box under other boxes,” Liz Argo said in a recent interview at her home in Yarmouth Port, but she immediately knew what she had found. It was a play called “Something Borrowed” by [Kurt Vonnegut Jr.](#) that her mother, [Betsy Argo](#), the arena theatre founder, and Vonnegut had referred to when Liz Argo videotaped them in 2005.

“It’s a lost masterpiece, of course,” Vonnegut said in the video, but Betsy Argo countered, “It’s not going anywhere.” Vonnegut told Liz Argo then if she ever found the play, to do something with it, and now she has.



Argo, a Yarmouth Select Board member with a theater background from childhood, is directing the play at Eventide Theatre Company in Dennis. She also has appeared in Eventide and other Cape productions in recent years.

## **A manuscript set aside for 10 years**

She first found the copyrighted manuscript in 2013 when she was going through her mother's things after she died, but she didn't read it then and set it aside until 2023.

When Argo finally read the play through, she thought, "This has merit. It has good bones." She also thought it had more of a historic quality because of references to World War II. Vonnegut served in the war and was a prisoner of war.

The manuscript was typed on a manual typewriter, but Argo showed where Vonnegut did much editing in his own handwriting.

Although Vonnegut is known more for his novels like “Cat’s Cradle,” “Slaughterhouse Five,” and “Breakfast of Champions,” Argo said, “he was intrigued by plays and did enjoy doing plays.”



Vonnegut wrote the play, “Between Time and Timbuktu,” and others, she said. His play “Penelope,” was first performed at the Arena Theatre and went on to Broadway to become “Happy Birthday, Wanda June,” starring Rod Steiger and Susannah York from December 1970 to March 1971.

## **Vonnegut's Cape Cod connection**

“He had many years where he wasn’t successful,” Argo said. “That’s why he met my parents, because he was reviewing plays.”

Vonnegut lived with his family in Barnstable for many years. Betsy and Gordon Argo founded the Arena Theatre in 1950, the only summer stock theater in the round, which Betsy ran until 1976, when it became The [Academy of Performing Arts](#), still in the former Orleans Town Hall.

Vonnegut liked spending time at the Argo family home when she was a child. Argo said. They called it “the house on the hill,” because it was built behind the theater for the Argo family — where Liz and her brother and sister lived — as well as for all the actors and others involved in the summer stock theater. The children were in almost every play from the time they were two or three years old, Argo said.

“Kurt was a great friend,” Argo said and her mother and Vonnegut shared the same kind of humor. Argo also interviewed Vonnegut in the movie she made, called “[Stagestruck: Confessions from Summer Stock](#)” about America’s first summer stock theater in the round. The movie can be seen on PBS and YouTube.

## **What is Vonnegut's 'Something Borrowed' about?**

The synopsis of “Something Borrowed,” which is being performed as a staged reading, is this, Argo said: It is set in 1954 in a Berkshires inn. Two of the four main characters are an older, well-heeled New York couple — Rudy, played by Chuck Gifford, and Barbara Neal, played by June Farlin. The couple, an actress and a stockbroker, are on a retreat to recover and get away from the city, but the woman is bored silly and the man is put out with her, Argo said.

Barbara gets excited when a newlywed couple arrives at the inn and she flirts with the young man, Eddie, a veteran of a POW camp in Korea, played by Connor McLeod, and she criticizes the bride, Wanda June, who is “right off the farm,” played by Summer Bates.

At a dance at the Vets Hall, the couples get involved in philosophizing about what men and women are looking for and why

they need each other. The men start singing a World War II song, called “Lily Marlene,” about an ideal woman.

Then, well — Argo doesn’t give away the ending.

She said she is most looking forward to a talk-back at the end of the show to ask the audience, “Is this the lost masterpiece?” of Kurt Vonnegut. She will also show an excerpt of the video she made of her mother and Vonnegut.

“Something Borrowed” will be shown at the Eventide Theater on Oct. 4 at 7:30 p.m. and Oct. 5 at 4:30 p.m. Tickets at [Eventidearts.org](http://Eventidearts.org) or call the box office at 508-233-2148.