



ANNISQUAM VILLAGE PLAYERS

2013 SEASON NEWSLETTER

CHICAGO Comes to Annisquam

This summer we are traveling from Munchinland in Oz to Chicago, Illinois. That's right, we are going to produce CHICAGO, with all the glitzy Bob Fosse dance numbers, all played out in the Cook County jail. The AVP is particularly excited to perform this show because it is highly sought after and the most restricted show that Samuel French has rights to. The original Broadway musical opened in 1975 (a non-musical version of the show opened on Broadway in 1926). The revival in 1996 holds the record for the longest-running American musical in both Broadway history and the West End (London) history. The 2002 Academy Award-winning movie brought the show home to the masses, starring Renee Zellweger, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Richard Gere and Queen Latifah. The story is a satire on corruption in the criminal justice system and the celebrity criminal. CHICAGO is based on the true story of two Chicago murderesses of the 1920s, Beulah Annan and Belva Gaertner, who became celebrities after they were acquitted. Ginger Rogers played Roxie Hart in the earlier non-musical version of the show.

But the music is what the show is really all about, and what we are excited to present to you. The original musical version was a series of vaudeville numbers strung together, based on popular vaudeville performers of that era. Bob Fosse made his dance movement internationally known in this show, and his wife, Gwen Verdon, played Roxie in the originally Broadway show. Song after song have become show-stoppers: "All That Jazz," "Cell Block Tango," "Razzle Dazzle," "When You're Good to Mama," and "Mr. Cellophane." At first blush it would appear that the cast is primarily women, but that is not the case. Of course the



women are well known: Roxie Hart and Velma Kelly, the two star murderesses, the "Merry murderesses" of "Cell Block Tango" fame, Momma Morton, the corrupt jail matron in charge of the women, and Go-to-Hell Kitty, another merry murderess who tries to upstage Velma and Roxie. There are also female reporters and fan dancers who have a number of songs and dances. On the male side are Billy Flynn, the sleazy lawyer, Amos Hart, the hoodwinked husband, Fred Casely, Roxie's murdered lover, Sargeant Fogerty, the omnipresent police officer, and a corrupt

assortment of reporters, lawyers, judges and juries, tailors, and a master of ceremonies. In our "Razzle Dazzle" number, we will be looking for teen acrobats. One of the leading characters, Mary Sunshine, can be cast as either a man or a woman (if a man, he must have a high tenor voice). There are also roles for children (guideline: ages ten and up) who play newspaper kids with their own song and dance routine. One age restriction in the show is that no woman under the age of 18 will be allowed to dance in "Cell Block Tango."

Auditions Call

The auditions are on Sunday, May 26, at 6PM at the Annisquam Village Hall. Callbacks will be on Monday, May 27, at 7 PM. Children should prepare "Razzle Dazzle". Men and women should prepare any song from the show which they want to sing. There will be a dance audition as well for both men and women who want dance roles (special requirement: male tap dancers). Rehearsals will start the middle of June, and the show runs from Tuesday, August 6 through Sunday, August 11. Please come to

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Put on Your Dancing Shoes

AVP choreographer Donna Viau has a busy summer ahead. Not only will she be choreographing *Chicago* but this year, since dance is an essential element of the show, she will be conducting dance auditions and participating in the selection of the cast. Co-written and choreographed by the legendary Bob Fosse, *Chicago* puts the music and dancing center stage, with scenery and costumes used to accentuate the musical score. Donna, or Deej, as she is known by friends and family, is well prepared for the challenge. She plans to create original choreography adapted from the Fosse style.

Fosse's signature dance style was heavily influenced by his vaudeville background. The son of a Chicago vaudevillian, he started performing as a child and by the time he was a teenager, he was appearing regularly in burlesque shows. His early exposure to the bawdy side of show business is particularly apparent in *Chicago*. Each of the musical numbers in the show was fashioned after the act of a famous vaudeville performer. Even the structure of the show, with an emcee introducing each number, mimics vaudeville in order to satirize the criminal justice system of 1920's Chicago as "all show business."

When he first came to Broadway in the 1950s, Fosse's provocative dance style was shocking to many. He often felt stifled by directors who wanted to tone down the sexuality of his numbers. In 1954, he landed his first job choreographing an entire musical, *The Pajama Game*. The director almost cut the number "Steam Heat" because it



was too steamy, but he left it in and the show was a smash hit. Fosse earned his first of eight Tony awards, launching a career that was to transform Broadway and revolutionize the dance world.

Fosse referred to his style as "an amoeba," at once fluid and angular. *Chicago*, perhaps more than any of his other shows, is closely associated with

this style, characterized by finger snaps, turned in pigeon toes, and sultry hip and shoulder rolls. The big challenge is executing the detailed movements. Nikki Graff Lanzarone, who played Velma on Broadway says, "[Fosse's style] relies on such tiny details. And you have no tricks to hide behind, so you have to get them all exactly right." It's all about control and isolation. Fosse dancers must be able to isolate everything, down to their eyeballs, elbows, and fingers. And they don't just execute dance moves; they must play a role. Every move is infused with character.

When asked how people should prepare for auditions, Deej noted that training in jazz, ballet, modern and/or tap is helpful. "Most people think Fosse is just a bunch of poses," she said, "but, in fact, it requires great technique." A strong core is important. There's no need to prepare a routine. Deej will be teaching a brief bit of choreography at auditions. "People should just be sure to come dressed and ready to dance," she said.

Meet the Assistant Directors

The following three assistant directors will support Terry Sands and Mary Curtis, our artistic directors.

Kristina Martin (Choral Director)

Kristina Martin has enjoyed working with the AVP both on stage and as a choral director since 2004. She teaches voice and choral singing with the Music Department at the Waring School in Beverly. A resident of Rockport, she conducts the Youth Choir at the Rockport Congregational Church and has taught music and drama at all levels in the Rockport Public Schools. She has performed with various Cape Ann theater groups, as well as with the North Shore Music Theater, the Washington Opera Company, the Springfield Opera Company, the Lyric Opera and Starlight Theater of Kansas City.

Deej Viau (Choreographer)

This will be Donna "Deej" Viau's fifth season with the AVP and absolutely loves working with the cast and crew each year. Meeting Terry and Mary has been a gift. She absolutely loves the process, the history, the community and heart of all of it.

Deej holds a BFA in Dance from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and spent years dancing for promi-

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Children in CHICAGO

The AVP generally aims to select plays that appeal to actors and audiences of all ages. In the past several years, the shows have offered ample opportunities for our younger actors. This year, the AVP will be branching out to do a show targeted to a more mature audience and cast: the Fosse classic *Chicago*. It is rare for a community theater to obtain the rights to perform this highly sought-after play, and the opportunity was too good to pass up.

We are suggesting a guideline of ages ten and up for children. The board debated setting an age limit for cast members, but instead decided to let parents determine for themselves whether to allow their children to participate. The directors have in mind a scene that is suitable for children as young as ten, which will involve kids as newspaper boys and girls. The focus will be on the Fosse choreography.

Website Update

Welcome back everyone! Along with AVP's new and exciting show **CHICAGO**, there are additions to the website for your perusal:

- There is a new **"WHERE ARE THEY NOW"** page. Here you will find interesting updates on past & present AVP performers and their music, dance, acting and educational endeavors. Please provide any salient updates on family or friends via the "Contact US" page on the website at <http://annisquamvillageplayers.com/contact-us>. Two recent AVP grads: Gillian Hurst, a vocal performance major at Westminster Choir College, was playbill-highlighted as a featured soloist with the principles, and as a chorister, for the Philadelphia Orchestra's performance of "Saint Matthew's Passion. Claude Deering recently appeared in the film **SIDE EFFECTS** (Steven Soderbergh, Director); he played the role of Zach, a patient of the psychiatrist played by Catherine Zeta-Jones.
- AVP has progressed even further digitally this year with the incorporation of a **QR** code for ease of linking or sharing the AVP web-site and updates with family and friends. **QR** stands for a **"Quick Reference"** code. Use your smartphone to "scan" the below code and it will automatically open the AVP website. Free software to "read" QR codes is available for IOS and Android smart phones at the iTunes and Android Play stores.



Can you recognize any of these women resembling men from the March 2013 Talent Show? This scene was one of 25 acts, including Dixieland Band, songs, readings, playing of musical instruments, and stand-up comedy which graced the Annisquam stage. History buffs will recognize this melieu tracing its roots back to the Annisquam stage in the 30s and 40s.

Chicago: Based on a True Story

(excerpted from *chicagothemusical.com*)

Believe it or not, both the characters of Roxie and Velma are based on two actual murderers: Beulah Annan and Belva Gardner. The real scenes took place in 1924 in Chicago when Beulah (Roxie) was accused of killing the "intruder" Harry Kalstedt while Belva (Velma) was charged with murdering her husband. Both murders became front page stories in the Chicago Tribune when reporter Maurine Watkins realized the sensational appeal the two personalities could draw through her tongue-in-cheek reports.

The supposed pregnancy used to speed up the trial, the sleek lawyer who helped define the media frenzy, and the acquittal of both ladies sounded like a page out of Hollywood, when in fact they were actually real life. Tribune reporter Maurine decided to turn her experience with Chicago's famed murder-row darlings into a comedy titled "Chicago" that reached Broadway in 1926. A film version was created two years later and a second film version, "Roxie Hart," starred Ginger Rogers in 1942.

These original productions of *Chicago* eventually inspired the musical that continues to wow audiences today. Nearly 70 years after Beulah Annan rocked Chicago, media manipulation in the justice system continues to seem all too familiar, which explains why audiences are still captivated by the blunt tale of criminal celebrity.

Annisquam Village Players Porch Tour 2013

Friday August 2, 2013, 5-7 PM

Please join us for the third Porches of Annisquam, a walking tour of private porches with spectacular views of Lobster Cove, Annisquam River, Ipswich Bay and beyond. The tour will conclude with a sunset serenade by the cast of the Annisquam Village Players singing a sampling of songs from this years production of **CHICAGO!** Tickets and maps are available at the Annisquam Exchange or at Annisquamvillageplayers.org. Tickets, which often sell out, are \$25.00 and all proceeds go to the Annisquam Village Players.

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auditions and sign up for set and costume committees. We need your help. The AVP will again produce a musical float in the Gloucester Horribles Parade on July 3, attempting to keep its title as the best musical float. For additional information, please visit our website at "annisquamvillageplayers.org", and follow us on Facebook. We hope that this summer you will come to the Village Hall for lots of song, dance and "all that jazz."



Annisquam Village Players
 50 Leonard Street
 Annisquam, MA 01930
www.annisquamvillageplayers.org
 Facebook page: [annisquamvillageplayers](https://www.facebook.com/annisquamvillageplayers)



Meet the Assistant Directors, *continued from page 2*

nent choreographers in Boston. Early in her career, she started her own non-profit dance company, DANCEVISIONS, which performed throughout the Boston area, raising money for charitable causes. She has been teaching Creative Movement and Dance Theater for 20 years in schools from the South Shore to the North Shore. Since 2000, she has been an instructor at the Hamilton Wenham School of Dance, teaching jazz to youth, teens and adults, and Creative Movement to young children.”

Christopher Lawnsby (Music Director)

Chicago will be Chris’ first production with the AVP, and he is looking forward to an exciting and memorable production. Chris is a math teacher at Rockport High School, but he loves music at least as much as math (he actually likes math!). Chris has been the pianist for numerous productions, including West Side Story, HMS Pinafore, Joseph, The Last 5 Years, Oklahoma, Beauty and the Beast, The Wizard of Oz, Cinderella, and many more. He has music-directed cabarets and shows both at Colgate University and at The Footlight Club in Jamaica Plain.

His grandmother was a classical piano teacher and introduced Chris to the piano, which he has now played for 24 years (give or take). His true love for music didn’t blos-

som until he learned to play the Jurassic Park music when he was in third grade — he’s been at the piano ever since.

Support the Annisquam Village Players



It is the mission of the Annisquam Village Players to provide an opportunity for local Cape Ann residents, young and older, to engage and develop their talents for musical theater. Become a MEMBER OF THE PLAYERS: Support our local arts and our Mission. The AVP relies on membership dues to help cover our operating expenses. An Annual membership is \$30 for Individuals and \$60 for Families. Advertising opportunities are also available — please contact us. **Mail-in registration:** send your name, address, phone number, and email address with your membership fee, *payable to Annisquam Village Players*, to : AVP, c/o Stevie Neal, 50 Leonard Street, Annisquam, MA 01930.”

AVP Board 2013

Mary Curtis, Jane Deering, Mike English, Victoria Fortune, Linette French, Chicki Hollett, Paul Hurst, Pete Kovner, Keith McCarthy, Gina Milne, Stevie Neal, Laura Osmond, Daphne Papp, Terry Sands, Evy Stewart, Anne Williams.