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Annisquam Village Players present 'Annie' Aug. 10-15

By Elizabeth Ross White/ Correspondent

Cape Ann Beacon

Posted Aug 05, 2010 @ 05:38 PM

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What's this?

Playing Annie is fun even though "it's been a lot of work," Silveria says. It's especially exciting this summer because her brother, Michael, is in the show together with five cousins.

"Kids and adults will really like the show because it has a lot of fun songs and some of the lines are really funny," she says.

This past year, Silveira played the Scarecrow in "Oz" where she attends school at Briscoe Middle School in Beverly. When the AVP performed "The Sound of Music" two years ago, she played the role of Bergita.

One of her favorite scenes in "Annie" is at the orphanage where she performs with the other children actors.

"My favorite song to sing is "Tomorrow," she says. "It's a song that everybody knows."

The show will appeal to a wide audience even though it features children.

"A lot of people think it's a kid show, and obviously it is," says Sands. "It also has some of the greatest adult roles in musical theater."

One of the most memorable adult roles is that of Miss Hannigan, the orphanage director. Played by Jennifer-Lee Levitz, Miss Hannigan is a mean-spirited and dominating character on the stage.

"I love it," says Levitz jokingly, "Because, well, it's fun to be mean."

Being on stage with children is fun because they are so genuine, she says.

"Playing the villain is always fun. It's fun to be with the kids because it really is playful. "It's really playing," she says.

Levitz, who lives in Gloucester, has a long track record of work in community and professional theater. Her most recent performance was at the Gloucester Stage in "Loving Hearts" with Sarah Clark.

One of the highlights of "Annie" is the song "Easy Street," which features the characters of Miss Hannigan, Rooster, and Lily. In the song, the characters complain about their lot in life.

"It's a fantastic song and scene," says Sands. "It's really a show-stopper. I think many people are familiar with it."

Mike English, who plays Daddy Warbucks, has performed in four previous AVP productions.

"The cast is really fun to work with this year. This year has been the most enjoyable and fun so far," he says. His favorite show tune

Gloucester — Cape Ann residents looking for a summer diversion will be delighted and inspired by the musical "Annie" to be performed Aug. 10-15 by the Annisquam Village Players (AVP) in Gloucester.

The show, originally performed on Broadway in the 1970s, features lively music, a cast of colorful characters and the touching story about a young girl named Annie. The story takes place during the Great Depression, and is based on the Harold Gray comic strip "Little Orphan Annie."

"I think this is going to be one of the most popular shows we've ever done," says Terry Sands, director of the AVP. Interest in the show has been high, he says, based on ticket sales and e-mail and phone inquiries in recent weeks.

With approximately 60 cast members, the show includes about 40 adult roles and 20 children roles. "It has things to please both kids and adults, and it certainly is a family musical," says Sands.

Last year, AVP performed "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat," which was entirely music and no dialogue. This year, the show "is more traditional with dialogue and songs and quite a few dance numbers," says Sands.

In "Annie," four of the six lead roles — Annie (Julia Silveira), Daddy Warbucks (Michael English), Grace (Ariel Sargent) and Lily (Victoria Fortune) — have appeared in previous AVP shows. The two other leads, Miss Hannigan (Jennifer-Lee Levitz) and Rooster (Rick Gadbois), are new to the AVP stage.

Annie, played by Julia Silveira, 13, is winning the hearts of many.

"She's excellent, is a delight to work with, and she has a lovely voice. All of her lines were memorized within about three days after she received the script," says AVP co-director Mary Curtis. Silveira has appeared in two previous AVP shows including "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" and "The Sound of Music."

is "Something is Missing" when he sings about having a lot of money but no one to share it with. He especially loves the last scene of the show "because it wraps everybody in it together."

For some in the show, it's a family adventure. English has two sons in the show: Jared, 11, who plays a dogcatcher and a hobo; and his other son, Jacob, 8, who plays another hobo.

Children are star performers in the show. Youngsters have two dance numbers, "Hard Knock Life" and "You're Never Truly Dressed Without a Smile." In "Hard Knock Life," the children's singing voices "are really shining," says English. "They have dialogue within the song and they just do it really well as a team."

Earlier this summer, AVP won first place for its "Annie" musical float that appeared in the July 3 Horribles Parade in Gloucester. Child actors in the show sang "It's a Hard Knock Life."

"For two hours, they sang their hearts out," Sands says. "It was a huge crowd pleaser."

For children and adults, the show's message hits home.

"It's an enjoyable story and quite a poignant one," says Curtis. "It's telling the story of Mr. Warbucks who has all the money in the world but was lonely. ... It's a love story of a daughter finding a father and a father finding a daughter."

AVP is a community theater that has been in operation for nearly 100 years. Yearly summer productions are a highlight for many in Annisquam and surrounding Cape Ann communities. All shows take place at the Annisquam Village Hall on Leonard Street.

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