



ANNISQUAM VILLAGE PLAYERS

2016 SEASON NEWSLETTER

Dear AVP Family:

This summer, Annisquam will be transformed into a French provincial village and a mystical castle haunted by a hideous beast as the AVP stages one of the longest-running Broadway musicals of all time, **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST**. Based on an eighteenth century French fairy tale, the story had many iterations before Disney adopted it and produced the animated film version in 1991, which has been called “the finest animated movie ever made.”

Based on this success, Disney then transformed the story into a family-oriented Broadway musical, which opened in 1994 and ran until 2007. The musical has been produced in thirty countries and boasts some of the most well-known songs of all musical theater, including “Be Our Guest” and “Beauty and the Beast,” which garnered an Academy Award as best original song and a Grammy for best pop song (sung by Celine Dion). A major motion picture starring Emma Watson (of Harry Potter fame) has been filmed and will be released in the spring of 2017.

The story line is well-known: a selfish young prince is transformed into a hideous beast by a beggar woman/enchantress when he turns her away on a winter night. His only chance of salvation is learning to love someone and winning her love in return. Over the years, the beast has been viewed as a composite of a bison, bear, deer, gorilla, lion, wild boar and wolf.

The show brings fabulous roles for all ages. For men and teens there is the young prince, the Beast, Gaston (the handsome yet arrogant dim-witted suitor of Belle), LeFou (Gaston’s humorous sidekick), Maurice (Belle’s eccentric father), Lumiere (the “ladies man” maître d’ of the castle who has been

Beauty and the Beast



Illustration by Ari Steegstra

transformed into a candelabra), Cogsworth (the tightly-wound butler of the castle who has been transformed into a clock), and Monsieur D’Arque (the proprietor of the lunatic asylum).

For women and teens, there is Belle (the beautiful yet misunderstood heroine who was modeled after Judy Garland), Mrs. Potts (the castle cook who has been transformed into a teapot), Babette (the flirtatious maid who has been transformed into a feather duster), Madame de la Grande Bouche (an opera singer who has been transformed into a wardrobe), the old

beggar woman/enchantress, and the three frivolous girls who are in love with Gaston.

The cast also includes a narrator (male or female) and an ensemble who play the townspeople and the castle servants. There are many roles with speaking and solo singing lines and five major musical numbers, including the show-stopping musical cabaret “Be Our Guest,” in which the castle servants become singing, dancing dishes, flatware, napkins, etc. For children, there is the role of Chip (a young castle boy who has been transformed into a teacup), and the singing, dancing dishes in “Be Our Guest.”

The auditions are on Sunday, May 29, at 6 PM at the Annisquam Village Hall, with callbacks on Monday, May 30, at 7 PM. Children and adults should prepare the final verse of “Be Our Guest.” Adults interested in a specific role may also prepare any other song from the show. There will be a dance audition as well for men, women and children. We are also looking for creative people to help with challenging costumes and sets. This is a family show for all ages, and we want your ideas.

Continued on page 2

Tale As Old As Time

Tale as old as time,” the title song from *Beauty and the Beast* proclaims. Though the tale is much older than the Disney movie that made it so famous, it isn’t nearly as old as many fairy tales. Anthropologists have traced some stories, such as “Little Red Riding,” back more than 2,600 years. Most fairy tales have no known origin, and were passed along orally, some believe via ancient trade routes. This would account for variations of the same stories that have been unearthed from Russia to Africa to England, with adaptations in each place reflecting local environmental and cultural concerns.

Unlike tales whose origins are unknown, *Beauty and the Beast* can be traced back to an original author: a Frenchwoman named Madame Gabrielle–Suzanne de Villeneuve. Though some critics have noted similarities to the ancient Greek story of *Cupid and Psyche*, Madame Villeneuve’s novella, published in 1740, is the first known version of *Beauty and the Beast*. It was written for adults and has some stark differences from the tale we know today.

The novella addressed a major concern for women of eighteenth century France: the fact that they had few options open to them besides marriage and very few rights as wives. They were not allowed to divorce or own any property, and they couldn’t even choose their own husbands. Their parents made this critical decision and were often more concerned about the groom’s social status and wealth than their daughter’s happiness. A great fear for women of the time was that they would be married off to someone who was, in the metaphorical sense, a beast.

Thus, in Madame Villeneuve’s story, Beauty’s father willingly hands Beauty over to the beast to save his own life. Unlike in the Disney version, the beast is not a prince in monster form; he is a thoroughly savage, cruel and dangerous creature. The focus of the story is on his inner transformation into a civilized, compassionate, loving being. He doesn’t become hu-

man until after he and Beauty are married.

The story was later adapted by Mme. Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont, a French governess in England, who adapted the novella into a shorter story for children. This version, published in a magazine for proper young ladies, was meant to teach a moral lesson. It minimized the savagery of the beast and emphasized the need for Beauty to see beyond appearances and recognize the good inside him.

Like all fairy tales, the story continued to evolve through retellings, with the beast becoming increasingly less threatening and dangerous. This coincided with women gaining greater control of their lives and choice of husband. Another change that occurs is that Beauty goes to the Beast not out of obedience to her father or a sense of duty, but a feeling that it is her fate.

The first movie of *Beauty and the Beast* was a live-action film directed by Frenchmen Jean Cocteau in 1946. It targeted adult audiences and highlighted the more mature themes of the original story. Many critics believe this to be the best dramatic interpretation of the story, but the best-known adaptation is the 1991 Disney animated movie. It was based on Mme. Beaumont’s children’s story and also drew from Cocteau’s 1946 film. Disney explored creating a film version of *Beauty and the Beast* as far back as the 1930s, and again in the 1950s, but the idea didn’t take hold until the 1991 musical was conceived. The award-winning score is widely considered to be a large factor in the movie’s success. It was the first animated movie to be nominated for an Academy Award for Best Picture.

In 1994, *Beauty and the Beast* was the first Disney movie to be adapted into a Broadway play. It seems an especially fitting form for a fairy tale, since plays allow so much room for the directors and cast create their unique vision of the story. The AVP is sure to produce a version of *Beauty and the Beast* with plenty of local flair.

Giving Back

As part of its mission to “engage, entertain and enrich our community,” the Annisquam Village Players has made charitable outreach a focus of the group. Last summer, residents from Brooksby Village in Peabody and the Rose Baker Senior Center in Gloucester were invited to the final night of dress rehearsal. The seniors were able to see the show, as well as some of the behind-the-scenes action, for a minimal fee, in much less crowded conditions than a typical show night. Attendees had a wonderful evening and raved about it afterwards.

In addition, the AVP donated a block of opening night tickets to a group called 2 Show We Care, which offers patients with life-threatening illnesses the chance to attend live theatrical and musical events. It was a rewarding and magical

experience for both the attendees and the cast members who had the opportunity to interact with them after the show. The AVP continues to look for opportunities to give back and enrich our community. Visit the AVP website and click on “contact us” to offer any ideas or suggestions you may have.

AVP Letter, from page 1

Rehearsals will start the middle of June, and the show runs Tuesday, August 9, through Sunday, August 14. The AVP will produce a musical float in the Gloucester Horribles Parade on July 3 (in which we have won a trophy for many years). For additional information, please visit our website at “annisquamvillageplayers.org”, and follow us on Facebook.

Up Close with Choral Director Kristina Martin

Although AVP choral director Kristina Martin has served AVP in a variety of capacities over the past dozen years, many of you may not be familiar with the amazing experience she brings to AVP. We thought it high time that we filled you in.

The daughter of a classical singer, Kristina grew up in Worcester, Mass with music and performance as part of her DNA. She's been singing and performing for as long as she can remember. Thinking a degree in vocal performance "impractical", she minored in music, and graduated with a B.S. in Communication Disorders/Elementary Ed. from Brigham Young University...and a future husband, Gene. After graduate study in the opera program at Boston University, the couple married and moved to Kansas City where Kristina sang for six years with the KC Lyric Opera and the Starlight Theater.

When Gene's job brought them to Washington, DC, Kristina performed with...are you ready for this?...the Washington National Opera at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts! We weren't kidding when we said "amazing." As much as she enjoyed her experience in DC, Massachusetts was calling, and when Gene landed a position in Gloucester (with three young daughters in tow: Isabel, Chloe, and Gwendolyn), the pair moved back home, settling in Rockport where they have resided since 1990.

Over the past 26 years Kristina has been active as a performer, teacher, and/or director with several North Shore performance organizations. In addition to her work as choral

director for the AVP, she played lead roles in *Music Man* and *Carousel*. Kristina has also performed at North Shore Music Theater (*A Christmas Carol*, *Phantom of the Opera*, and *Alice in Wonderland*), Back Bay Chorale, Wakefield Chorale, and Theater in the Pines. Kristina is currently a music teacher at the Waring School in Beverly, Youth Choir Director at the Rockport Congregational Church, and director/singer with the women's a cappella ensemble, 'Leven. She has also taught for Rockport Schools, NSMT Summer Program, and offers private voice lessons.

One of her favorite professional experiences was performing in the 90's with Gloucester's one-of-a-kind composer and raconteur, Stephen Scotti, and friends in several of his original creations, including *Viva! Cummings*, his internationally-acclaimed cabaret, inspired by the poems of ee cummings.

And what does the future hold for Kristina Martin? Well, at the risk of jinxing her luck, she reveals a few dreams: First, successfully potty training her new puppy! Then, a travelling Cape Ann Youth Chorus representing this wonderful community at state and nation-wide events, a sledding excursion in Switzerland, creating a bike path around Cape Ann, and (we probably don't want to give away too many details on this one) a chain of historic landmark themed mini-golf courses designed by local visual and landscape artists.

Who else could come up with that? This is just one of the many reasons why we are so fortunate to have Kristina Martin in our AVP family. Kristina is looking forward to working with AVP friends both old and new on *Beauty and the Beast* this summer!



Gloucester Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken has taken a huge interest in the arts on Cape Ann, resulting in the Cultural Arts Initiative. The following is a portion of a speech about AVP (given at a meeting between the Mayor and the Leonard Club in Annisquam): "*The Annisquam Village is just that, a village for all. The Cultural Arts in the Annisquam theater (the Annisquam Village Players) is a unique one. It is a mentoring program for young children, which gives them strength and confidence. For others it gives them a sense of belonging. For someone like me, an ordinary person with very limited talent, the AVP makes me feel like a star.*"

AVP Board Members 2016

David Cluett, Mary Curtis, Victoria Fortune, Linette French, Val Gilman, Chicki Hollett, Paul Hurst, Pete Kovner, Keith McCarthy, Gina Milne, Tom Moriarty, Stevie Neal, Daphne Papp, Terry Sands, Evy Stewart, Anne Williams.



The First Annual AVP Cabaret Night

"Come taste the wine. Come hear the band. Come blow your horn, start celebrating. Right this way, your table's waiting."

Why not treat life as a "cabaret old chum" in the cold wintertime? That is just what the AVP did one chilly night in February, and what a night it was! Who would have known the first annual Cabaret night would have been a full house. The event exceeded all expectations. The proceeds will help fund this summer's production. *Continued on page 4*



Facebook page: annisquamvillageplayers
www.annisquamvillageplayers.org

Annisquam, MA 01930
50 Leonard Street
Annisquam Village Players



Membership Support

Annisquam Village Players
(now a 501C3 tax-exempt organization)

Each year, as the Annisquam Village Players plans for its annual summer production, it appeals to the Annisquam and Cape Ann community for special support.

This year, AVP is pleased and very excited to announce that it will be bringing *Beauty and the Beast* to Annisquam. This is a show that the AVP has wanted to do for a long time but could not, due to restrictions on production rights. Now at long last, the rights have been secured and plans are well underway for the production, with performances scheduled for Tuesday, August 9 – Sunday, August 14!

While our shows are almost always sold out, ticket sales cover only 75% of our costs, leaving us with a significant shortfall that must be made up. Production costs can run anywhere between \$25,000 to \$30,000, and each year these costs keep going up. This year will be no different! Producing this fabulous musical will be a challenging endeavor for which we need your support. Here's how you can help:

- By **joining as a member** you will not only be supporting community theater here in Annisquam (one of the oldest in the US) but you will receive our newsletters, invitations to AVP Special Events AND the special opportunity to buy reserved seats before they go on sale to the public.
- Another way to support the AVP is by **volunteering** to work on this year's production where there is much to be done "behind the scenes."
- Finally, know that **your donations** are most welcome as well. It is with your special support as a donor that the AVP is able to continue to produce the highly professional Broadway shows that have become its hallmark.

We are pleased to announce that the Annisquam Village Players has been granted tax exempt status as a 501C3 charitable non-profit organization. Contributions to the AVP are now tax deductible to the full extent allowed by the law.



AVP 2016 Dues:

Check one:

- ☐ Individual \$40 _____
☐ Family \$70 _____

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

Phone _____

☐ I would like to get involved with this year's production. I'm interested in helping with _____

Please make checks payable to: **Annisquam Village Players**

And return to:

Stevie Neal, Treasurer

50 Leonard St., Gloucester, MA 01930

The First Annual AVP Cabaret Night, *from p. 3*

A Behind-the-Scenes Perspective

The Cabaret at the Annisquam Village Players was a ball! It was so much fun seeing people show their special and unique talents in a friendly environment. Several girls and I were servers of food and drink. We were all performers too, which added to the fun. Because everyone there was relaxed and enjoying themselves, it was easy to perform. I would participate again any day! —*Rhiannon Hurst*

Important Dates:

- **AUDITIONS** are on Sunday, May 29, at 6 pm at the Annisquam Village Hall
- **CALLBACKS** on Monday, May 30, at 7 pm
- **REHEARSALS** will start the middle of June
- **THE SHOW** runs Tuesday, August 9 — Sunday, August 14, 2016