



ANNISQUAM VILLAGE PLAYERS

2017 SEASON NEWSLETTER

Dear AVP Family:

This summer Annisquam will be transformed into the glitzy Hollywood of the 1920's, when the movie industry was converting from silent films to "talkies." Known as the best movie musical ever filmed and one of the greatest movies of all times, *SINGIN' IN THE RAIN* will grace the AVP stage with unforgettable songs, fabulous dancing, and laugh-out-loud comedy situations. The iconic 1952 movie starring Gene Kelly, Donald O'Connor and Debbie Reynolds won awards for O'Connor (Cosmo Brown) as best supporting actor and a nomination for Jean Hagen (Lina Lamont) as best supporting actress. The story was later brought to the London stage in 1983 and the Broadway stage in 1985. A recent revival has taken Paris by storm, and after Debbie Reynolds' untimely death this winter, a Broadway revival is in the works.

The movie is best known for its show-stopping songs "Singin' In the Rain," "Good Morning," "Make 'Em Laugh," and "Moses Supposes." And its special effects of silent films and singing in the rain will not disappoint Annisquam audiences. Most of all, in this time of political turmoil, the AVP delights in bringing a happy, comedic show of a bygone era to laugh away our troubles. There are fabulous roles for all ages.

For men, the handsome, suave leading man Don Lockwood (Gene Kelly) and the comic sidekick Cosmo Brown (Donald O'Connor) are classic roles. Fun supporting roles, both singing and non-singing, are the magnanimous film producer, the theatrical and frazzled film director, a more subdued film director, the manic film agent, the phonetically challenged diction coach, the singing tenor leading man in the first "talkie," the villain star of the silent movie, and various comic assistant directors and sound engineers



Singin' in the Rain

who help produce the movie.

For women, there are two leading ladies with star power: the youthful and energetic Kathy Selden (Debbie Reynolds), and the comic Lina Lamont (Jean Hagen) with the nasal voice. Fabulous supporting roles, both singing and non-singing, include the flapper socialites Zelda Zanders, Olga Mara and Mary Margaret, the over-excitable film columnist Dora Bailey, the motherly diction teacher Miss Dinsmore, the silent movie lady-in-waiting, the Coconut Grove flapper chorus girls, a comic stripper, and various comic female movie personnel.

There will be five big show numbers. We need two young boys (8-10 years old) to play young Don and young Cosmo, and we have a children's scene that will be a crowd pleaser.

Auditions will be held on Sunday May 28, at 6 PM at the Annisquam Village Hall, with callbacks on Monday, May 29, at 7PM. Children

should prepare "Fit As a Fiddle." Adults should prepare any song from the show for a role they wish to audition for, or "Singin' In the Rain" for a chorus part. Anyone wishing to dance (all leads except Lina, as well as flapper girls and two young boys) should take some tap lessons prior to auditions if you have not tapped before. Dance will be a part of auditions. We are always looking for creative people to help backstage, and especially this year with some creative technical challenges.

This is a family show for all ages, both performers and audiences. Rehearsals start the middle of June, and the show runs from Tuesday, August 8, through Sunday, August 14. The AVP will produce a musical float in the Gloucester Horribles Parade on July 3. For additional information, please visit our website at annisquamvillageplayers.org, and follow us on Facebook.

TO ENGAGE, ENTERTAIN AND ENRICH OUR COMMUNITY

The AVP board is passionate about giving back to our local community. Musical theatre in Annisquam Village has brought together both novice and experienced performing artists of all ages, entertaining audiences from Rockport, Gloucester, and throughout the North Shore. Sharing our love and dedication to community theatre with others continues to be our goal.

For the second year in a row, our AVP mission, “to engage, entertain, and enrich our community” was the catalyst for partnering with Gloucester and Rockport senior centers, as well as a local Gloucester non-profit, To Show We Care, to provide free summer theatre to local senior citizens and patients who are in or recovering from cancer treatment and illnesses.

Close to 100 local senior citizens received complimentary tickets to our final dress rehearsal for the production of *Beauty and the Beast*. The AVP is grateful to Lucy Sheehan, Director of the Rose Baker Senior Center in Gloucester, and Diane Bertolino, Rockport Senior Center Director, who helped us fulfill our mission by distributing tickets to seniors. A hearty thanks, as well, to Bob Ryan, Director of CATA, who organized transportation so that seniors without cars could get to the Village Hall dress rehearsal. After the performance, local seniors expressed their excitement about previewing *Beauty and the Beast*.

Similarly, twenty-five recovering cancer patients affiliated with the local non-profit, To Show We Care, www.2SWC.org, enjoyed complimentary tickets to our opening night performance of *Beauty and the Beast*. The AVP would like to thank local chairperson and founder, Stephen Tyler for his leadership and partnership with community theatre. “It was a fantastic show and our guests loved it!” said Mr. Tyler. “It is enjoyable partnering with the AVP.”

With our unwavering spirit of giving back to our community, the Annisquam Village Players cast, crew, and co-directors were thrilled to have established this collaborative partnership with our local senior citizens and To Show We Care.

Val Gilman
AVP Board Member

AVP IMPORTANT DATES 2017

Auditions: May 28, 6PM
Callbacks: May 29, 7PM
Rehearsals: Beginning mid-June
Show Dates: August 8–14



THE AVP'S SECOND ANNUAL CABARET NIGHT

On a snowy night in February, the AVP hosted its second annual Cabaret Night, treating the audience to a fun-filled evening of wine, hors d'oeuvres and a remarkable line-up of entertainment. Like many who braved the weather to come out, the hall was dressed up for the event. White lights lined the ceiling and tables were adorned with white tablecloths and elegant centerpieces made by the AVP's artistic set-designer, Chicki Hollet.

After cocktail hour, the entertainment was kicked off by Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken, with Tom Moriarty leading a rousing rendition of the National Anthem. The acts that followed ranged from a professional-quality performance of “The Sound of Music” by local voice teacher Bethany Vahn; a trio of delightful duets by Andrew Hankinson and Thom Smoker, Bethany Vahn and Bobby Kerrigan, and father-daughter duo Larry and Sadie Cook; a moving medley of poetry by Annisquam poet laureate Duncan Nelson; and an impressive interpretation of “Macavity the Mystery Cat” by cat-costumed Nadia Robertson, to name a few.

Many thanks to all who attended and to those who helped pull off the event, which raised much-needed funds for the AVP's summer production. The evening exemplified what the AVP is all about: bringing people together to celebrate the wonderful talent in our community. Check the AVP website in January 2018 for news of our next Cabaret Night, and be sure to come hear the music play!



MARY CURTIS, A STAR ON AND OFF STAGE

If you know Mary Curtis, beloved and outspoken co-director of the Annisquam Village Players, it may be hard to believe she was a shy little girl who avoided drawing attention to herself. But her voice attracted the attention of faculty at her grammar school, who asked her to sing a solo in front of the PTO. Upon seeing the size of the audience, she was terrified, but the song went well, and the moment she heard the applause, she was hooked. It was the beginning of a lifetime love affair with the stage.

At age 12, Mary began singing lessons, which she continued through much of her life. She intended to go to college to study music, but her marriage at 18 delayed her plans. When her husband's work brought their family to Massachusetts from California, Mary enrolled at Boston University, where she majored in music and drama. She joined several singing groups, including one that performed at Tanglewood and Symphony Hall with the BSO, where she sang under the direction of a number of top conductors, including Carl Bernstein. "He was amazing," she said. "He could make his entire body vibrate to the beat of the music."

She and her husband Fred had moved to Dover, where Mary joined the church choir. The members of the choir told her about their local community theater group, The Dover Foundation Players, that was going to be putting on *Guys and Dolls*, and encouraged her to audition for the lead. Mary got the part of Sarah Brown, the lovely, innocent young missionary woman. "I loved all of it," Mary said, "the people involved, the rehearsing, the memorizing, the performances, and of course the applause." It was the first in a string of starring roles she performed with the Dover Foundation.

Her favorite role was Anna in *The King and I*, because it has both wonderful music and fabulous dialogue. "I love to act as well as sing," Mary said, and this part provided such rich opportunities for both. Mary also starred in some of the Dover Foundation's plays, including *Blythe Spirit* and *Auntie Mame*, but found it less satisfying to perform without music. In a musical, the lyrics of the songs play such an important role in telling the story and portraying the characters. As a singer, she said, "having to do a play without singing is like having one hand tied behind your back."

During this period she joined the Vincent Club, a Boston organization that supports women's health at MGH through fundraising efforts, including theatrical performances. Mary wrote music for several of their shows, and had an opportunity to assist a New York director while he was working on their plays. It was a great learning experience.



Adding to her accomplishments onstage, Mary collaborated on writing two musicals with Tony Hutchins, a pianist and composer, who had written an off-Broadway musical called *Two if By Sea*. Their first, called *Sweet Liberation*, was about the women's liberation movement. It was performed by the Dover Foundation, as was their next musical, *Nothing to Hyde*, which was so popular it was revived for a second run that Mary was asked to direct. She went on to direct many more plays in Dover, including four she had previously starred in.

When the photographer who normally did publicity shots for their shows was ill, Mary called another Dover photographer named Barbara Delinsky to ask if she was available. Delinsky said, "I don't do that anymore. Now I write romance novels." Mary was intrigued and Delinsky offered to help Mary put together a project proposal. It was accepted, and soon Mary published her first of 16 romance novels, through Berkley Publishing and Harlequin/Silhouette. She found her theater experience extremely helpful in her writing career. After all those years acting and directing, "writing dialogue came so naturally to me. The harder part," she said, "was getting characters from one place to another. I couldn't just write 'Enter stage right'."

When Mary and Fred moved from Dover to Annisquam, Mary thought she was saying good-bye to her life in the theater. But her reputation preceded her. Much to Fred's dismay, at the first cocktail party they attended in Annisquam, she was approached by Terry Sands, who asked her to join him in working with the Annisquam Village Players. Thus began their 23-year partnership.

"It was a nice way to move into the community," she said, "to be able to contribute and do something I love." After so many years together, Terry and Mary have developed a symbiotic working relationship. While they make artistic decisions together, Terry's role includes "hunter — gatherer" of needed participants and making sure everything comes together, while Mary likes to concentrate on coordinating the songs and dialogue with the actors' movement on stage.

As Mary noted to one reporter, "Terry is optimism run amok, and I'm Murphy's law." It's a winning balance, judging from the long run of successful shows the two have produced together. "In my opinion," Mary said, "the AVP has produced first class entertainment with actors who could compete on commercial stages, and choral, dancing, set design and production that rivals the pros."

She enjoys providing children in the community with

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Facebook page: annisquamvillageplayers
www.annisquamvillageplayers.org

Annisquam, MA 01930
50 Leonard Street
Annisquam Village Players



ANNISQUAM VILLAGE PLAYERS MEMBERSHIP DUES & MORE – 2017

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

This year, AVP is pleased and very excited to announce that it will be bringing the award winning musical comedy, *Singin' in the Rain*, to Annisquam. The AVP has been wanting to do this show for a long time, and now with the rights secured, plans are well underway for its production, with performances scheduled for Tuesday, August 8–Sunday, August 13!

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 only 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 nation) 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.

**** *The Annisquam Village Players is now a **tax exempt 501C3 charitable non-profit organization** and contributions to the AVP are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by the law.*



ANNISQUAM VILLAGE PLAYERS 2017 DUES:

- ☐ Individual: \$40 ☐ Family: \$70
- ☐ I/We would like to make a donation
- ☐ I/We would also like to get involved with this year's production _____

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

Phone _____

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

Stevie Neal, Treasurer

50 Leonard St., Gloucester, MA 01930

MARY CURTIS, *continued from page 3*

the chance to get involved in music and theater, often writing in or adapting scenes to provide them with a spotlight. "I also believe that little theater provides a sorely needed outlet for a great many adults who love theater, performing and staging, and that the existence of the AVP enriches our community." There is no doubt that Mary, herself, enriches the community, generously sharing her time and talents to bring a little magic to Annisquam each summer. We are fortunate to have such a star in our midst.

AVP Board Members 2017

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.