



ANNISQUAM VILLAGE PLAYERS

2019 SEASON NEWSLETTER

This summer Annisquam will be transformed into a brilliantly-hued Greek island, as the AVP produces one of the most popular musicals of the Broadway stage, *Mamma Mia!*. The jukebox musical romantic comedy is based on the songs written by ABBA, an internationally beloved Swedish pop/dance group active from 1972 to 1982. The title of the musical was taken from the 1975 chart-topper song “Mamma Mia.”

The musical opened in London in April 1999 and in New York in October 2001, becoming the ninth longest running Broadway show. The Broadway opening was shortly after 9/11, and many found the show to be an affirmation of life in the midst of the destruction of 9/11. The show became a major motion picture in 2008 (filmed on the Greek island of Skopelos), and a sequel named *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again* was released last year. It is one of the few major musicals where the songs, popular worldwide since the 1970s, predated the show and the movie. Many audience members will recall as teens singing such megahits as “Dancing Queen,” “Super Trouper,” “Mamma Mia,” “Gimme! Gimme! Gimme!,” “Waterloo,” and “The Winner Takes It All.” We will not be surprised to see our audiences singing and dancing in the aisles of the Village Hall this summer.

The show tells the story, through the ABBA music, of a young woman (Sophie), raised by her mother (Donna) in the Greek islands, and engaged to be married to her fiancé (Sky), seeking to find her father to walk her down the aisle. After reading her mother’s diary, she discovers that there are 3 possible contenders (Sam, Bill and Harry), all of whom she invites to the wedding.

There are fabulous roles for all ages. Donna used to be in a female band with her best friends (Rosie and Tanya),

who are also invited to the wedding. Sophie has best friends Ali and Lisa as bridesmaids, and Sky has buddies Pepper and Eddie as groomsmen. For men, there are also

the three potential fathers. And, of course, there is a high-energy singing and dancing chorus of young and old to bring the ABBA songs to life. There will be a dynamic children’s scene of Greek youth preparing a special Greek dance for the wedding.

Auditions will be held on Sunday, May 26 at 6pm (children) and 7pm (adults) at the Annisquam Village

Hall, with callbacks on Monday, May 27 at 7pm. Children should prepare the first verse of “Waterloo.” Adults should prepare any song from the show for a role for which they wish to audition, or the refrain of “Mamma Mia” for a chorus part. Dancing will be a huge part of the show. There will be a dance audition as well, so come to auditions with proper shoes for dancing. All auditioners should be dressed appropriately. And we are always looking for creative people to help backstage. This is a family show for all ages.

Rehearsals start the middle of June, and the show runs from Tuesday, August 6 through Monday, August 12. For additional information, please visit our website at “annisquamvillageplayers.org” and follow us on Facebook.

MAMMA MIA!

AVP IMPORTANT DATES 2019

Auditions:	May 26 at 6pm (children) and 7pm (adults)
Callbacks:	May 27 at 7pm
Rehearsals:	Beginning mid-June
Show Dates:	August 6–12, 2019



Theatrical Arts Scholarship

In 2017, AVP launched a Theatrical Arts Scholarship as part of its mission to enrich our community and provide an opportunity for local Cape Ann residents, young and older, to engage and develop their talents for musical theater. The needs-based scholarship offers up to \$1000 to students, aged 8-18, who have demonstrated a commitment to developing their artistic talent in acting, voice and/or dance.

In 2017, AVP awarded a scholarship of \$1000 to Xander Lovelace, a talented young dancer, who has appeared in *Singin' In the Rain* and *The Little Mermaid*.

In 2018, AVP awarded two scholarships, in the amount of \$500 each, to Ts Burnham of Gloucester and Michael Newman of Rockport. Audiences will be familiar with Ts who has performed in four AVP shows (*Annie*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Singin' In the Rain*), including her lead role as Ursula in last year's *The Little Mermaid*. Michael has appeared on the AVP stage in a variety of supporting roles over the past four years (*Camelot*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Singin' In the Rain*, *The Little Mermaid*).

In her scholarship application, Ts said, "I have experienced some of the best summers of my life on and offstage with AVP, and have learned so much about being part of

a supportive and creative community. I am so very grateful for this." Pursuing a degree in Musical Theater from Dean College, Ts used her scholarship to satisfy a college requirement of taking professional voice lessons, which were in addition to her regular tuition costs. "I have always dreamed of becoming a working performer, despite knowing how hard it will be, and I still do as I commit my college years to it, exclusively," she said.

Michael began his acting career at Rockport Middle School. "When I first entered the auditorium to try out I could not have imagined how important drama would become in my life," recalled Michael. He landed a few small roles in that first production but as Michael says, "I was hooked from that moment on." Michael used his scholarship to pursue voice and dance lessons through local professional studios. "The scholarship will help me improve these skills in order to go forward and continue to enjoy all that musical theater has to offer."

For others interested in the AVP Theatrical Arts Scholarship, applicants must have participated in at least one AVP production in the past three years. Application guidelines and the 2019 due date will be posted in May on the AVP website, annisquamvillageplayers.com.

The 4th Annual Cabaret Night

The AVP's fourth annual Cabaret Night, held on February 9th, drew a sell-out crowd from far and near. Many attendees noted it was the best one yet. The decorating team of Chicki Hollett, Mary Flaherty, and Evy Stewart were especially creative this year, turning the Village Hall into a 1920's speakeasy, complete with secret password and a police raid. Costumed dancers from the BoSoma School of Dance in Hamilton passed platters of hors d'oeuvres during cocktail hour, and later performed a traditional Irish Step Dance. Director Katherine Hooper also brought in a duo from her adult dance troupe who wowed the audience with a professional-quality routine.

These were just some of the highlights from the wide variety of acts that made up the evening's entertainment. A number of veteran AVP performers also danced, and many more sang songs ranging from show tunes to pop ballads to classic jazz tunes, in honor of the night's speakeasy theme.

There were several moving tributes to beloved Annisquam Poet Laureate Duncan Nelson, including a slide

show with accompaniment by Tom Moriarty, singing Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World," and an original



BoSoma dancers from Cabaret night.

poem by Gordan Baird, written in Duncan's hallmark style. The audience was also treated to a couple of dramatic monologues: Dan Bruns, who played Atticus Finch in Stage 284's recent production of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, performed the closing argument from the courtroom scene, and the AVP's Mary Flaherty performed a scene she called "My First Big Break" from the John Sayles movie *Passion Fish*.

The evening was a huge success, raising much-needed funds for the AVP's summer show, as well as its student scholarship fund. Many thanks to

Tom Moriarty and Kathy Johnson, who were in charge of the food, and to everyone who helped pull off a great evening, as well as all who attended. The AVP depends on and greatly appreciates your support. Hope to see you again next year. Be sure to buy your tickets early! We anticipate another sell-out crowd.

Celebrating Duncan Nelson

The AVP has lost one of its most talented long-time performers. Duncan Nelson, the poet laureate of Annisquam, joined the muse gods last winter. Duncan first appeared on the AVP stage when the group was in its infancy. He returned a half-century later in 1997, in *My Fair Lady*, as Eliza's father, Alfred Doolittle, a poor Englishman with his unforgettable scene where he traced the journey of a flea down his pants leg, culminating in the memorable song "Get Me To the Church on Time."

Duncan graced the stage in more than a half dozen shows from 1997-2005. Some of his favorite roles were English Lord Evelyn Oakleigh in *Anything Goes*. He fondly recalled chasing Jen McKay (Reno Sweeney, the sexy evangelist) as he sang "The Gypsy In Me" and "Let's Misbehave," culminating in his infamous swashbuckling sword scene. He also loved joining his son Peter on stage in *Oklahoma*, where Peter played Curley and Duncan played the part of Andrew Carnes, and in *West Side Story*, where Peter played Tony and Duncan played Doc, the owner of the drugstore where the Jet gang hung out.

Duncan's last performance with the AVP was in 2015, when he played the magician Merlyn in *Camelot*, a prophetic role where he was captured by the nymph Nimue and taken to the underworld. His last words to Nimue as he was being led away were "Oh, please . . . not yet. Don't steal my magic now. Can't you wait a bit longer?" Duncan always told me that this scene got him through his chemo treatments that summer. Duncan's magic, like Merlyn's, will linger on. — Terry Sands

Duncan Nelson was such an iconic member of the Annisquam community for so many years. For me as a youngster he was the tennis player that I hoped one day I might become. And he was the quintessential loved citizen of the community, from his family roots, to his trusteeship of the Old Wharf Lot Association, to his incredible ability to capture the essence of the moment and the times with his beautiful composition and articulation of his poetry.

And as it relates to the Village Players what a grand presence he was. Jill remembers him as the most amenable of all the actors that she encountered in her role as responsible for costuming. He and I were aspiring, but still very amateurish, actors, totally dependent on the every word and direction of Terry Sands and Mary Curtis. I will always remember *The Music Man*. He had the most impos-

sible lines to memorize, lines that he practiced morning, noon and night, hitting an absolute home run on the final night. And for me I was always the "anvil salesman" and, as he suggested, a bit of a shady one at that. What a magnificent presence he was for us all.

—Jill and Fred Lovejoy

Duncan, our old and my recent friend—

Last autumn, as we swam off Lighthouse Beach, you said you had lived a rich and wonderful life and were at peace with the inevitable. In that spirit, we celebrate your having shared your bounteous self with the Annisquam Village Players, our audiences and our community. We must tell how much we miss you, and will miss you all the more as summer blooms and our stage blossoms. You didn't need a stage; you carried one with you. A man in full and of so many parts that we must avow, "Duncan, we hardly knew ye." And you, as one who could not help but turn a phrase, might rejoin, "Ahh, but how *heartedly* you knew me." And so we did.



Duncan as Merlyn.

Actor. Prolific and generous bard. Dashing ambassador for Squam. Sprightly muse. Serious in his infinite jest. Bright-eyed, with tongue firmly in cheek. Profound in his elegiac and uplifting remembrances of his dear middle daughter Burr. Outsized yet modest. I heard from others, but never from Duncan's lips, that he had a show-stopping, star turn in *My Fair Lady* as the rollicking roustabout Alfred P. Doolittle. Rather, Duncan talked about his admiration for others' performances, offering encouragement and enthusiasm, whether he (or they) were the "stars" or supporting players.

In any role Duncan played, he was totally committed to this odd performing art of ours. Ok, if one must be truthful, his singing voice was... how to say it diplomatically... not the equal of his speaking one, but he was so enthusiastic that we were swept along nonetheless. Plus, he had great legs! To share the stage with his enthusiastic self was to appreciate how fully he created an imaginative world in which all others could take part—on the stage, behind the scenes or out in the darkness of the hall.

There would have been no *Brigadoon* worthy of audiences' wonder unless his Andrew McLaren—and the other players—believed and dreamed that mist-shrouded

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Celebrating Duncan Nelson, from page 3

Highland village into existence. When Duncan summoned Evelyn Oakleigh to elegant life in *Anything Goes*, indeed, anything did go, and go, and go! His Merlyn commanded our respect, earned our affection, and then pulled at our hearts when the wizard made his struggling, untimely exit. In large part because of our awareness of Merlyn's *absence* in the final Act, *Camelot* moved us as deeply as it did. Yes, the role of Merlyn was written to create that effect, but Duncan brought it home.

Even when not in a summer's production, he stood fast with the AVP ensemble. For the wrap party marking the end of the run—and so, the end of our summer's idle—Duncan would create and recite a poem commemorating each and all of the Players, with casts and crew rarely numbering less than half a hundred. What kind of person does this? Or can do this?

Indeed, what about that facet of this multifaceted man...The Bard, the Poet Laureate of Annisquam? As in demand were his orations and widespread his acclaim, the depth of his talent and skills were, I propose, underestimated—perhaps because of his convivial manner and omnipresence. Duncan once asked Terry Sands and me to stand in for him and deliver one of his poems at the AYC. Easy! Fun! I mean, how hard can it be to read some rhymes aloud from a page? Wouldn't even have to memorize. Terry allotted 30 minutes to rehearse; I wondered why we needed any at all. What fools we mortals be!

As our half hour grew into one, then two, and then moved towards a third hour—our tongues numbed and minds tangled—we realized with cold fear how out-

matched we were by the subtlety and complexity of Duncan's work. Our performance? Well, my memory will likely differ from that of Judge Sands, but imagine sitting on the AYC porch watching two Sunday sailors tacking into a stiff breeze on an out-going tide having neglected to drop their centerboard. We did finally make it to shore, and that by slogging through the mud flats. On the other hand, Duncan, with a rakish tilt and light hand, would have glided onto the dock, dropped the main and skipped ashore humming a tune. He made his art (and his life) look easy and breezy. They were not.

The AVP has lost someone magical, effervescent and significant. More importantly, we have lost a dear friend. As you—Duncan—understood and wished, the show must go on. It will; we will see to it, yet be ever grateful and heartened that your "resonations" will live on with us, and ours with you.

*And knowing that one day you will not hear
From me, I am sustained by this,
That though no man or woman lives forever
Yet what we do
While we live, as Burr has made clear,
Lives on in its resonations
Through generations upon generations,
And this is what is
As beyond the power of death to sever,
As is, I hold, this contact I have made with you.*

– Duncan Morse Nelson – R.I.P.–

—Pete Kovner

Capital & Equipment Improvements

AVP is renowned for its talented players and orchestra pit, the wonderful and hardworking group of directors, spectacular costuming and scenery, and... An infectious *joie de vivre*! However, the quality performances have been allowed to truly sparkle through strategic capital investments and equipment improvements for the performance hall space. In particular, AVP has coordinated fundraising campaigns since the 1990's to improve the comfort, aesthetic appeal, lighting and hall soundscapes, in order to enhance the overall experience for the audience and players alike.

Below is a list of some of the key improvements spearheaded by the AVP with approximate costs and their benefits. Please keep in mind that *fundraising efforts have been absolutely essential*. Box office sales, the Porch Tour, and program advertising receipts just cover royalties for the rights to the show, costumes, sets, choreographer, cho-

ral coaches, musicians and all the essentials that make for the fabulous live theater experience you've come to expect from the Annisquam Village Players:

- **Phase 1 Sound system** (1995)~ donated by Dave Gormley to improve the hall's soundscape.
- **Pianos** added to the Village Hall in the early 2000s - Mary Curtis donated her spinnet piano. Nancy Bornhofft helped the AVP research the purchase of a new electric piano, which has been servicing music in the Hall for the last 20 years.
- **Air Conditioning** (2001) ~ \$12,000. Elderly villagers and guests (e.g. Rose Baker Senior Center in Gloucester & Council of Aging in Rockport), or those with heat/humidity health sensitivities are able to attend or perform in comfort. The Village Hall Association has been able to confidently schedule meetings, wedding receptions and other gatherings during the summer.

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AVP Reviews

The past two summers, reviewers from the Eastern Massachusetts Association of Community Theatres (EMACT) have attended AVP's annual production. We are pleased to announce these reviews have been flattering.

Regarding AVP's 2017 production of *Singin' In the Rain*, special kudos were given to the technical aspects of the show, particularly the film within the play, which one reviewer described as "professional quality," and the rain-making technique, which was "impressive" and "work[ed] beautifully." The reviewers cited the costume design as "one of the best elements of the production." They remarked that the "special umbrellas [featuring the show's logo] in the closing number were very effective."

Of AVP's orchestra, a reviewer wrote, "The musicians were excellent. The music was powerful and ...The ensemble/choral sound was full and sounded beautiful." The vocal coach and "Beautiful Girls" scenes were also acclaimed for both their singing and their movement. The choreographer (Deej Viau) received special recognition, with "the Grove girls number, the 'Beautiful Girls' sequence, the vocal coach scene and particularly 'Make 'Em Laugh'" being recognized as stand-outs. Cosmo (Andrew Murdoch) "had enormous energy and his moments on stage were noteworthy." Special recognition was also given to child



© Kim Smith

actors young Cosmo and young Don, and Lena (Victoria Fortune) was credited as "fabulous at creating a squeaky, grating voice and holding this character throughout the show."

The EMACT reviewers returned for the 2018 production of *The Little Mermaid*. As they had noted the previous year, AVP made "good use of limited space." They described the set as "beautifully rendered," making particular note of the attention to detail on the ship and the grotto. They praised the "great variety in color and style of the costumes," and described the lighting as "a key element in setting the mood." The reviewers complimented Deej Viau's choreography again, calling it "creative, innovative, and fun to watch, and "the silks provided a whole new level of artistry." They also praised the leads' "strong vocal performances" and observed the cast "seemed to be enjoying themselves." The reviewers attested, "the 'Under the Sea' number was unbelievably charming," and acclaimed the actors Sebastian, Flounder and Scuttle for their "great comedic timing," noting that they "were truly engaging with each other and the audience." Finally, "the large cast was filled with energy and joy."

The experts agree: AVP continually produces excellent community theater!

Capital & Equipment Improvements, from page 4

Our local art conservators are relieved that the gallery is climate controlled to better preserve the valuable collection of works by noted Cape Ann artists.

- **Phase 1 lighting** upgrades (2007) ~ \$1,500. Theater lighting to improve the overall illumination of the stage and hall for performances and other hall related activities.
- **Aesthetic Improvement** (2004) ~ invaluable. Tom Hauck's gorgeous Lighthouse Beach mural serves as the backdrop for countless events at AVH and AVP.
- **Phase 2 Soundscape** improvements (2018) ~ \$12,300- New moveable stage microphones and a set of mounted speaker systems have been installed that greatly improve the quality, clarity and crispness of the dialog, music and vocals throughout the entire hall. This has been especially helpful for listening pleasure in the back rows and show recording purposes.
- **Numerous other cumulative improvements** over time including, but not limited to, video screen for movie showing, electrical upgrades, and structural supports for aerial performances.

The list of board members, friends, families and private individuals who have generously contributed to these improvements is too long to recount here, but there is one partner that has been outstanding in their support – The Annisquam Village Hall Association and especially Steve Harris, regarding all Village Hall items. AVHA has been a willing and encouraging partner, providing some of the combined funds for the Air Conditioning and Phase 3 Soundscape improvements. AVP would also like to recognize two of its board members for their extraordinary efforts in supporting these initiatives — Mary Flaherty for capital fundraising, and Keith McCarthy for the light & sound initiatives as well as being our resident "web-master". Kudos and great thanks to AVHA, Mary, Keith and *all* the AVP board members for their ceaseless support to keep AVP vibrant!

AVP wants to extend its heartfelt thanks to all who support our shows and donate to achieve our vision for a superior Musical Theater experience. Your help has been invaluable, and we hope we can count on you in the future.



Facebook page: annisquamvillageplayers
www.annisquamvillageplayers.org

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Annisquam Village Players



SUPPORT ANNISQUAM VILLAGE PLAYERS, INC. (annisquamvillageplayers.com)



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Did you know that the **Annisquam Village Players, Inc.** is one of the oldest community theater groups in the nation and that each summer it brings musical theatre to Annisquam Village, entertaining and enriching audiences from Rockport, Gloucester and throughout the North Shore.

So that we may continue to produce the highly professional Broadway shows that have become our hallmark, the AVP needs your support, both as a **Donor** or a **Volunteer**. Here are ways you may help:

Become a Donor — Since the AVP is a 501(c) (3) charitable non-profit organization, all donations are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

Become a Volunteer — Join others in helping with the staging of summer productions where there is always much to be done “behind the scenes”.

AVP Board Members 2019

David Cluett	Val Gilman	Stevie Neal
Mary Curtis	Chicki Hollett	Daphne Papp
Mary Flaherty	Paul Hurst	Terry Sands
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Annisquam Village Players

2019 Dues:

- ☐ Individual \$40
☐ Family \$70

I/We would like to support the AVP with a gift of:

- ☐ \$500 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$150 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$25

☐ Other_____

AND/OR

☐ I/We will donate on line via Paypal
(To make gifts online, please visit our secure website at:
www.annisquamvillageplayers.com)

☐ I/We would also like to volunteer and get involved
with Mamma Mia!

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