



ANNISQUAM VILLAGE PLAYERS

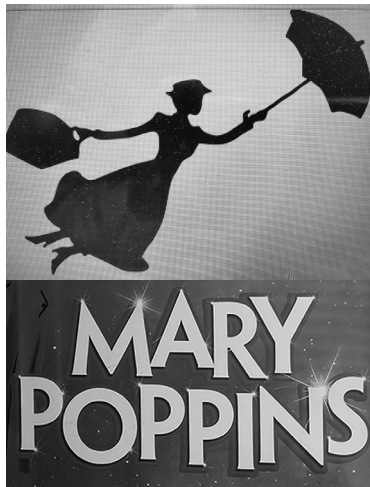
2020 SEASON NEWSLETTER

This summer, the Annisquam stage will be converted into the rooftops of 1910 Edwardian London as the AVP presents Walt Disney's "crowning achievement," *Mary Poppins*. This show, which became famous with the 1964 movie starring Julie Andrews and Dick van Dyke, later became the 2004 award-winning musical of London and Broadway fame. *Mary Poppins* was the only Disney film ever nominated for an Oscar for Best Picture, and Andrews won an Oscar for Best Actress. (Disney used the huge profits from the film to purchase the land for and build DisneyWorld in Florida.)

The story of P. L. Travers' (author of the *Mary Poppins* book series) relationship with Walt Disney was the subject of the 2013 Disney movie *Saving Mr. Banks*. Travers also gave musical theater rights to her story on condition that no-one from the film's production team be directly involved with the stage musical. However, Disney brought *Mary Poppins* back to the entertainment world in the 2018 release of *Mary Poppins Returns* starring Emily Blunt and Lin-Manuel Miranda.

This is one of the world's most loved stories with such songs as "A Spoonful of Sugar," "Chim Chim Cheree," "Step in Time," "Feed the Birds," and "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious." The AVP will use aspects of the three stories in its summer musical, with many special effects for which the AVP has become famous. Don't be surprised to see both people and objects floating around the stage.

There are many roles for all ages in this family-friendly story. Men will vie for roles as Bert (the dancing chimney-sweep), George Banks (the distraught father), Robertson Ay (the comic houseboy), Admiral Boom (the pompous neighbor), Neleus (the come-alive statue in the park), the Chairman of the Bank and members of his staid Board, two businessmen seeking loans from Mr. Banks, Uncle Albert (the mysterious laughing relative), and the overworked Park Keeper.



Female roles include Mary Poppins, Winifred Banks (wife of George Banks), Miss Andrew (the Holy Terror of nannies), the Bird Woman (with one of the best songs of the show), Mrs. Brill (the put-upon maid), the dynamic Mrs. Corry and her two daughters (who run a magic shop), the flirtatious Ms. Lark, Katie Nanny (the distraught former nanny), and Queen Victoria (another living statue).

Children's roles include Jane and Michael Banks, Valentine (the lead toy who comes alive), and many famous dolls and animals who revolt in the nursery. Our high-energy singing and dancing chorus

includes chimneysweeps, kite fliers, park strollers, and bankers.

Auditions will be on Sunday, May 24 at 6pm (children) and 7pm (adults) at the Annisquam Village Hall, with callbacks on Monday, May 25 at 7pm. Adults and children should prepare one verse from any song from the show. Please dress appropriately. Dancing will be a large part of the show, so come to auditions with proper dance shoes. And we are always looking for creative people to help backstage.

Rehearsals start mid-June, and the show dates are Tuesday, August 4 through Sunday, August 9. *For additional information and updates about possible changes in our schedule, including auditions, due to the coronavirus pandemic, please visit our website at annisquamvillageplayers.org and follow us on Facebook and our new Instagram account, created by Gina Milne. (Many thanks Gina!)*

AVP BOARD MEMBERS 2020

Mary Curtis	Val Gilman	Stevie Neal
Mary Flaherty	Chicki Hollett	Daphne Papp
Victoria Fortune	Paul Hurst	Terry Sands
Linette French	Keith McCarthy	Evy Stewart
Jim Frick	Tom Moriarty	Anne Williams

AVP 2019 Theatrical Arts Scholarship Winners

Cosima Mosher-Owens and Velia Wrinn

The AVP Scholarship Committee faced another difficult decision this year. After much deliberation, the Committee chose two recipients to receive the 2019 AVP Theatrical Arts Scholarship. The winners were Cosima Mosher-Owens and Velia Wrinn. Both girls participated in last summer's production of *Mamma Mia* and lit up the stage.

Cosima Mosher-Owens' dance background was evident from the moment she appeared at her first AVP audition. She has had many years of dance training at Rockport Dance Academy, which showed in her lovely dance number as young Sophie in *Mamma Mia*, her third AVP show. She has also taken numerous acting classes at North Shore Music Theater and Gloucester Stage, showing a real commitment to the performing arts. In her application, she indicated that she was interested in working on her singing, which is exactly what she did with her scholarship funds.

"Before I started [singing lessons] I had a lot of anxiety about singing in front of crowds of people because I wasn't very comfortable with my voice. But Jaque at Hummingbird Studios has helped me so much and I'm feeling much

more confident [I] even got Elsa and Anna's understudy in *Frozen Jr!*"

Mamma Mia was Velia Wrinn's second AVP show. She participates regularly in performances at the Waldorf School at Moraine Farm, and her teacher commended her "excellent stage presence" and noted that audience members often comment on how "natural and professional" Velia seems onstage. She certainly stood out in *Mamma Mia*, bringing tremendous energy and joy to her performances. She indicated in her application that she wanted to work on her dancing.

"I was able to complete the musical dance class this winter at the North Shore Music Theatre," Velia said. "I enjoyed the music and learning new dance steps. I liked that one but plan to continue with a more specialized dance class. I can't wait to dance in this year's show!"

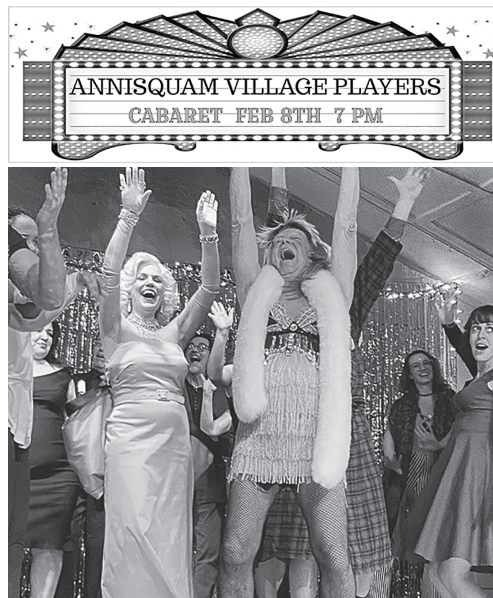
We can't wait to see Velia and Cosima in future AVP shows! The AVP is thrilled to support such talented young performers.

The 5th Annual Cabaret Night

Five years ago, the AVP took over the former Annisquam Village Church potluck supper and transformed it into an elegant affair known as Cabaret Night. Each year, the event has grown in reputation and attendance, and the 5th annual Cabaret Night, held on February 8th, was the best one yet.

The theme for the evening was Vegas at the Village Hall, and the hall glittered for the occasion, complete with a fringe curtain backdrop and plenty of sequined performers. Chicki Hollett led the decorating crew of Tom Moriarty, Mary Flaherty, Evy Stewart and Germaine Fritz, who dressed the tables with white tablecloths and mirror centerpieces, reflecting a single red rose in a wine bottle. A new table arrangement allowed for more seating, which was a good thing with a record crowd in attendance.

The performances were even more dazzling than the décor, with a greater variety than ever before. There were songs and skits, dance numbers, an aerial ballet, and even



an appearance by Marilyn Monroe! A large contingent of AVP celebrities graced the stage, including all four leading ladies from last summer's *Mamma Mia*, as well as stars from previous shows and other Cape Ann talent.

Many of the singers paid tribute to the theme by singing Rat-Pack era tunes. There were dance performances by students from AVP choreographer Donna Viau's Hamilton Wenham School of Dance and Katherine Hooper's BoSoma, as well as a number by Hooper's professional dance group that was stunning. The skits provided great comic relief, including an original skit by

Mary Flaherty, inspired by the portraits of the Village Hall, which was a huge hit with the crowd.

Many thanks to all who attended and contributed to the evening's success. The funds that were raised will help support the AVP's summer show and scholarship fund. It was a spectacular night that reminded all who were present what a special community Annisquam is.

Community Theater in Annisquam

The *Boston Globe* recently published an article on the value of community theater in Massachusetts. The article stated that even though Massachusetts is a mecca of “formidable entertainment,” community theater is still a staple of great theater, combining strong local ties and affordable entertainment. Since most people in community theater are unpaid volunteers, it is imperative that they produce challenging work and “shows that people will want to be a part of.” One of the ways to do this is to make the shows “more welcoming and inclusive.”

The Annisquam Village Players traces its roots back to the Civil War, when some young people in Annisquam formed a dramatic club, and performed their first play and charade in 1863. The play was written by John William Day, the grandson of the minister of the Orthodox Church (the precursor of the Annisquam Village Church), and the charade was written by Charlotte Augusta Lane (Aunt Tot), daughter of Captain Oliver Lane, and a prominent member of the community.

Thereafter, the club presented two plays each winter, the better one being produced again in the summer. In 1875, the club adopted the name The Annisquam Dramatic Club. This early history makes the Annisquam Village Players one of the oldest, if not the oldest, continually operating community theater in the country. The Footlight Club in Jamaica Plain, which traces its roots back to 1877, claims to be the oldest, but our Historical Society records give us 14 years precedence.

A 1920 article in the newspaper *Cape Ann Shore* states that community theater in Annisquam is as old as Annisquam itself. This article talks of the “highly developed community spirit in Annisquam,” which was fostered by the Reverend Ezra Leonard, who as Pastor from 1804-1832, brought Universalism to the Annisquam Village Church in the early 1800s and inspired a climate for creative work and an expanding interest in new ideas so important to creative people. In this venue, dances and

theatricals became popular. A 1937 article in a local newspaper stated that “when ‘Squam goes dramatic things are bound to be jolly.” The article consistently speaks of “the reputation Annisquam has always had at dramatics.”

The *Globe* article points out that “getting volunteers remains the greatest problem” in keeping a community theater going. A successful community theater requires community support, and the article points out that “the commitment is what makes community theater so special.” Unpaid volunteers often balance demanding jobs and busy family lives with the opportunity to both be a part of the community and participate in a unique creative process. “The sweat equity that goes into this makes it a very separate and distinct experience from anything else,” the *Globe* article states.

The Players pride themselves on two particular aspects of community

theater. The first is the involvement of children. Children are a key part of the magic of theater and the future of the arts. We receive positive comments each year from our DASH reviews about the children in the cast.

The second is the creative process. The AVP strives to add its own creative mark to each production and interpret each show in a unique, community-oriented way, such as incorporating local politicians and references to local news, as well as special effects like flying in *Peter Pan* and rain in *Singin’ In the Rain*. The DASH review of *Mamma Mia* points out that the show had a “different opening in that there was a lot of topical references to the area (Annisquam in particular). This was very smart thing to do — knowing what your audience wants and giving it to them....The audience was totally engaged and had a wonderful time.”

One of the greatest parts of community theater is “being a part of the creative process of making theater, whatever form that takes.” And that requires people both on and off stage. Please join this historical group and be a part of the special comradery, unique to community theater, that goes back in Annisquam more than 150 years.



Mamma Mia stars did not have to social distance last summer.

SUPPORT ANNISQUAM VILLAGE PLAYERS, INC.

While challenged this year by the uncertainties of life under the cloud of the Covid-19 epidemic, the Annisquam Village Players, Inc is determined that the show must go on, but AVP needs your support:

- ☐ **BECOME A MEMBER** of the AVP. Receive our newsletter, and invitations to AVP Special Events.
- ☐ **BECOME A DONOR.** 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,”

*If interested, please visit our website (annisquamvillageplayers.org), or mail your donation to:
Steve Neal, Treasurer, Annisquam Village Players, Inc., 50 Leonard Street, Gloucester, MA 01930*



AVP Alums

The AVP would like to celebrate alums from years past who have had success in the entertainment world:

Claude Deering

Claude Deering is a film and television actor whose credits include *Side Effects* (dir. Steven Soderbergh), *The Ugly Truth* (Columbia Pictures), and television shows on CBS, HBO, and ABC, in addition to commercials and theatre productions. His most recent appearance was in the world premiere of Jonathan Caren's play "Canyon" with the IAMA Theatre Company. J. Claude is a lifetime member of the LCT Director's LAB, and a graduate of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.

"AVP gave me my start in the theater. And I give enormous credit to Terry Sands and Mary Curtis for those first opportunities and for helping me find my way around the stage. I also want to thank my mom, Jane Deering, for her stage managing and her unyielding support of the AVP throughout the years. Terry and Mary's leadership and enthusiasm for the arts are essential for building an artistic institution in a community. And we are so lucky to have had them. Thank you, AVP. We love you!"

Megan Downey Wolf

Megan Wolf is a singer-songwriter, entertainer, and recording artist from Gloucester, MA, currently based in Salt Lake City, Utah. She recently launched her Amy Winehouse Tribute show in Las Vegas, Nevada. She was Cape Ann Guide's 2019 featured artist and not only calls Cape Ann the birthplace of her musical career, but the AVP stage as well. Wolf also performs with the Ultimate Joe Cocker Experience: Mad Dogs Unchained, and the popular dance band SAFETY 80's alongside fellow AVP artist, Renee Dupuis. Her debut album "This Girl" was released in 2017, and she is working on her second original release for late 2020.

"My experiences with the AVP gave me invaluable

inspiration, discipline, and focus as a young artist, and I hold some of my fondest memories on that stage and in those performances. Thank you so much to all the cast and crew members for their support, passion, and gift in blessing this community with such a wonderful program. My deepest gratitude and love goes out to Terry, Mary, and the friends and family I made along the years from *Oliver*, to *West Side Story*, to *Fiddler on the Roof*! Thank you!"

Cem Oslu

Cem was the musical director of the AVP 2014 production of *Peter Pan*. At the time he attended Berklee College of Music in Boston and told the AVP he had always wanted to play for a musical. Cem is an award-winning composer who, in 2013-2014, earned 1st prize in the MTNA (Music Teachers National Association) State Level (MA) Composition Competition and 2nd prize in the National Competition. That fall he moved to California, where he won 1st prize in the Kadikoy Sureyya Opera House Composition Competition in 2017, and 1st prize in Mersin International Music Festival Composition Competition in 2018. To hear some of his performances, go to his website at <https://www.cemoslu.com/>

Zosia Mamet

Zosia, Annisquam native and daughter of Lindsay Crouse and David Mamet, was born in Vermont in 1988 and summered in Annisquam until her mother moved to California when she was five. Zosia appeared in AVP's production of *The King and I* in 1994. She married American actor Evan Jonigkeit (*X-Men*, *Days of Future Past*) in 2016. She is an actress and musician in Hollywood, having appeared in a number of movies and starred as Shoshanna Shapiro in the HBO series *GIRLS* (2012-2017). She has also appeared in other TV shows including *Mad Men*, *Parent-hood* and *The United States of Tara*.