



ANNISQUAM VILLAGE PLAYERS

2021 SEASON NEWSLETTER

2021 Summer Show

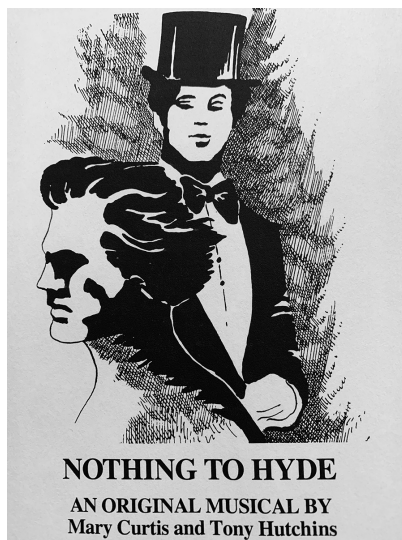
This summer, due to COVID-19, the AVP stage will be the schoolyard adjacent to the Village Hall, which will be transformed into an outside medical laboratory. The AVP will be producing a musical comedy, *NOTHING TO HYDE*, written by our beloved co-director Mary Curtis in 1979 and produced twice with great critical acclaim in Dover, MA, where Mary formerly lived and was director of their community theater.

The music was written by Tony Hutchins, a friend of Mary's who wrote music for off-Broadway theater. Mary and Tony's musical preceded by almost twenty years the Broadway musical *Jekyll & Hyde*, which opened on Broadway in 1997.

NOTHING TO HYDE is a musical loosely based on the Robert Louis Stevenson 1886 novella *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, but unlike the original novella, the musical is a comedy that takes place in Annisquam, when the great-grandson of the infamous Dr. Jekyll, who works in Boston, moves to the suburbs and sets up a laboratory in his house. He finds the chemical formula which his great-grandfather formulated to create Mr. Hyde, and he tries it with hysterical results.

The show delves into the issues of good and evil, and the id, the ego, and the superego, or conscience which exists in all humans. And, of course, there will be clever songs and choreography to entertain the Annisquam community. The show opens with the song, "Welcome to Annisquam."

Because of COVID, we will not be able to have auditions for the small cast, which will be comprised of local veteran AVP performers, all of whom will have had their COVID vaccine shots.



The show will take place outside in the schoolyard between the Village Hall and the Exchange, for a three night run, Thursday, August 12, through Saturday, August 14 at 7:30 pm. We will have a temporary stage built in the schoolyard, with lighting and sound and all the amenities the community is used to experiencing inside the Village Hall. Tickets will need to be reserved and there will be a limited number of tickets sold, with all seating socially distanced.

The AVP has renewed its rights to produce *MARY POPPINS* in the summer of 2022. At that time, we will have full auditions to cast one of the major

musicals of Broadway and bring a little bit of Broadway back to the Annisquam stage in the Village Hall. But we are excited this summer to return to our early roots of the AVP. (See article *1623 Studios Project on the AVP*). We look forward to welcoming you back to live theater in the vein of the AVP of 160 years ago.

When Boston Mayor Marty Walsh left Massachusetts this winter to join the Biden administration in Washington, D.C., he wrote a farewell letter to the Boston community in which he stated that he learned at a young age that a supportive community is the greatest blessing a person could have. He wrote that every community needs powerful community investments, which is emphasized during pandemic times when community health and well-being is at stake. Walsh pointed out that a way to do this is to become a positive influence on a young person's life and share creativity and a fresh perspective. We are all blessed to live in such a community, and the AVP is excited to be a part of the creative spirit and the education of youth that binds a community together in COVID times.



Steve Harris, Nancy Martin, John Bishop, Dave Pearce (Village Hall Board), Terry Sands, Mary Flaherty, Chicki Hollett (front row, AVP Board), Paul Hurst, Jim Frick, Kerry McKenna (back row, AVP Board). The Cabaret “Raise the Roof” was a fundraiser for the repair of the Village Hall roof and we raised \$17,000. (See Cabaret story on page 3.) Additional contributions came in after the picture was taken and are still welcome.



1623 Studios — BridgeCapeAnn.com Project on AVP

The AVP is working with 1623 Studios — BridgeCapeAnn.com to present the history of the AVP for a Timeline project in Gloucester going back to the mid-1800s and the Civil War. The AVP has traced its roots back to 1863, when Annisquam youth, preparing to fight in the Civil War, produced a show written by the grandson of the minister of the then Annisquam Village Church to help defray costs of the war. This early date makes the AVP one of the oldest, if not the oldest, continually operating community theaters in the country.

The group, then called the Annisquam Dramatic Club, produced two or three plays a year in the winter, written by its members, and then chose the best one to be produced again in the summer. The plays were produced either in the Village Hall or in the surrounding schoolyard.

The actors in the Annisqua Dramatic Club became famous all over Cape Ann. The names of some of these old shows were fascinating, and most were comedies, as is evident from the titles — “The Fellow Who Looks Like Me,” “Two Flats and a Sharp,” “Somebody’s Nobody,” “All Tangled Up,” “Bachelor Hall,” and “The Great Chicken Case” (I wish we still had the scripts). Some of the shows brought in talent from Boston.

The Village Hall, built in 1828, was initially used as a Baptist church under the Rev. Epes Davis. It went through many iterations over the years, including an elementary school, a high school, a retail store, a sail loft, a restaurant, a post office, a provision store, a pool hall, and a community meeting hall where weddings, funerals, parties, village meetings, and many performances of the Annisquam Dramatic Club and other musical and theatrical groups were held. It is reputed that the graveyard for the original Baptist church is located in the schoolyard. But don’t be wary of ghosts, since the inhabitants of the graveyard were later moved to Mt. Adnah Cemetery.

In the 1920s and 1930s the theater group wrote musicals by Annisquam authors and produced their shows in other parts of Gloucester (Bass Rocks). In the 1940s, the group started producing melodramas, and Russel Crouse of “The

Partnering with the Gloucester 400th

In 2023 Gloucester will be celebrating its 400th Anniversary with the overall theme of: “Our People, Our Stories”.

The story of the Annisquam Village Players dates to at least 1863, with interesting/unique people scattered through out our rich history. As such, it only made sense for us to become a proud supporter of the ‘Gloucester 400th’ and join with many other local non-profits as “Organizational Partners” of the Gloucester 400th.

Over the next year we intend to share our story with all of Gloucester and of course look forward to a grand celebration in ’23!



Virtual Cabaret Night Raises the Roof

The AVP's 6th annual Cabaret Night was unlike any other. The pandemic prevented the festive celebration at the Village Hall that we have all come to love, but the players outdid themselves with an online extravaganza that kicked off the Annisquam Village Hall's Raze the Roof capital campaign. All proceeds went toward the AVH's fundraiser to replace the roof on our beloved Village Hall.

While everyone missed donning their cocktail attire and gathering for drinks and hors d'oeuvres, the entertainment for the evening was better than ever. After introductions from Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken and Senator Bruce Tarr, longtime AVP orchestra member Nathan Cohen opened the evening with a violin performance from *Fiddler on the Roof*, and AVP leading man Bobby Kerrigan sang "There's No Business Like Show Business."

An advantage of the online format was that performers from across the country were able to participate in the event. One of AVP's most famous alumna, singer-songwriter Megan Wolf joined in from Las Vegas, singing a soulful rendition of Amy Winehouse's "Valerie." And Sara Ris, all the way in California, performed "Poor Unfortunate Souls" from *Little Mermaid*.

Local professionals Bethany Vahn and Gordon Baird also sang, along with an impressive coterie of AVP teenagers and young adults whose stunning talent will undoubtedly take them to much bigger stages: Emily Frick wowed the audience singing "First Time in Forever" from *Frozen*, Nadia Roberston's rendition of "Satisfied" could have been straight from the Broadway soundtrack of *Hamilton*, and



award-winning jazz soloist Rhiannon Hurst sounded like a seasoned professional singing "Save Your Love for Me."

A couple of charming duets were performed by Thom Smoker and Andrew Hankinson, as well as Ts Burnham and Andrew Murdock. And in a break from show tunes, former leading man Peter Nelson sang "Lilac Wine," Tom Moriarty brought on some hard-core rock 'n roll singing the Ramones, and Carol Cox provided comic relief with her sultry version of "Crazy" while pulling props from the front of her shirt.

The professional dance group Bosoma performed a spectacular African jazz number arrayed in vibrant costumes, and Hanna Anderson's hoop dance electrified the audience. Terry Sands and the "Guys Group" ended the evening with a barroom balad ("Seven Old Ladies Locked in the Lava-tory") which has been performed by many Annisquam groups over the years, and left the audience laughing. The online format also allowed for unique encore—a clip of Liz Jelinek and Victoria Fortune's final number from the AVP's 2013 show, *Chicago*.

Although it was not the event we are used to, this year's Cabaret added new dimensions to the show and brought joy not just to those in the village but many more across the country and beyond, a reminder that our virtual village reaches far and wide. The AVP raised more than six times the usual amount, making a significant donation toward a new roof for the Village Hall. Many thanks to all who participated and contributed to this event.

1623 Studios, Continued from page 2

Sound of Music," "Anything Goes." and "Life With Father" fame, was involved with the group after he purchased a summer house in Annisquam during that era. He brought a new focus on the introduction of musicals to the Annisquam stage. In the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, the AVP was active under Bob Edgerton and Lucy Mechem. In the 1990s the group, under Terry Sands and Mary Curtis, began producing annual shows involving major Broadway musicals.

Please be on the look-out for the Cape Ann Timeline presentation of the history of the AVP this spring, and the role of the Annisquam Village Hall as the venue for most of the shows. It is interesting to note the generations of Annisquam families involved in these dramas, as well as the children establishing the AVP as a coming-of-age process in Annisquam.

The AVP is working with 1623 Studios <https://www.bridgcapeann.com> to present the history of the AVP for a Timeline project in Gloucester going back to the mid-1800s and the Civil War.

AVP BOARD MEMBERS 2021

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



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www.annisquamvillageplayers.org
Facebook page: annisquamvillageplayers

Meet Rhiannon Hurst

Award winning Jazz Vocalist and Rockport HS Senior, **Rhiannon Hurst**, kicked-off her vocal and performance career at *Annisquam Village Players*. Then 3-year old Rhiannon followed her older siblings, Gillian and Quenton, onto AVP's summer stage and subsequent winter Cabarets, and hasn't stopped since! Her first performance was a duet with her brother, "Anything You Can Do I Can Do Better" from *Annie Get Your Gun*, when she held a high note for an extraordinary length of time. At that tender young age she was already showing star power.

Recently, Rhiannon was awarded the prestigious *2021 National YoungArts award for Jazz Voice*. YoungArts is the premier competition for performance arts in the USA, and Rhiannon was awarded the second highest award and cash prize (Honorable Mention), placing her as one of the top eight competing jazz vocalists in the country. Shortly thereafter, Rhiannon was awarded one of *MMEA's* (Massachusetts Music Educators Association) *Excellence in Music Awards* and associated scholarship. These follow behind

last year's full-tuition scholarship to attend Berklee College of Music's 5-week summer *ASPIRE* performance intensive. Rhiannon has also honed her skills as the lead professional vocalist/announcer for *Beantown Swing Orchestra* and the *Cape Ann Big Band*.

Rhiannon plans to pursue a Music major with a concentration in Jazz Voice, and a double-major (or minor) in Environmental Sciences based on her scientific explorations and awards for her *RPS Greenhouse Biodigester*. The system provides supplemental "green" methane heating energy, natural/organic fertilizers and carbon footprint reduction benefits for Rockport's schools. The *Homebio-gas* system employed is a first-of-its-kind installation in the USA, shipped from Israel. Over the past four years she has garnered numerous science awards and recognitions

Rhiannon warmly thanks Terry, Mary and the entire AVP family for all the years of encouragement, support and opportunities to perform!

SUPPORT ANNISQUAM VILLAGE PLAYERS, INC.

While challenged 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 (annisquaamvillageplayers.org), or mail your donation to:
Steve Neal, Treasurer, Annisquam Village Players, Inc., 50 Leonard Street, Gloucester, MA 01930*