

Old play gets new life in Sanbornton

By Donna Rhodes

Drhodes@salmonpress.com

newhampshirelakesandmountains.com/

Thursday, August 5, 2010

SANBORNTON — There was a lot of booing and hissing going on at the Old Town Hall in Sanbornton but it was all in good fun as the audience responded to the misdeeds of dastardly “Snavers,” plotting to kidnap darling Corabelle Bilgely and take the mail contract away from her father’s boat, the Daughter of the Lake.

“The Great Winnepesaukee Steamboat Race and Musical Talent Contest” was presented by the Sanbornton Historical Society. Written by Bob Kinerk and Andrew Rosenthal and presented for many summers in Laconia in the late 1970s, Kinerk’s former wife Lindley brought it back to the Old Town Hall in Sanbornton. She directed the play herself, bringing local talent to the attention of sold out audiences last weekend.

Music for the evening was provided by Mary Ruth Scott on an old-fashioned piano decorated as any parlor piano might have been in the days when steamboats chugged across Lake Winnepesaukee. Round tables for seating and the atmosphere of the centuries-old Town Hall provided the perfect setting. Outside the gazebo was laced with white lights and members of the Historical Society sold lemonade, iced tea, pie, cookies, popcorn and ice cream for theatergoers to enjoy during the show.

Kathy Chapman, playing Alice, kicked off the evening with an introduction to the play as “Hettie” (Karen Ober) held up signs to show the appropriate (and expected) audience responses, like “Boo,” “Hiss,” “Awwww” and of course “Applause.”

Many dramas unfolded throughout the production as Safety Officer Horace Dewberry (Chuck Doyle) inspected the Bilgely’s boat while lamenting over being abandoned on the doorstep of a church in Belmont as a baby. It is Ah Pun (Steve Ahlgren), employee of a local Chinese restaurant, who uncovers the secret of “the Lake City’s sordid past” and eventually brings in the Brazen Woman who gave birth to Dewberry.

Both Capt. Bilgely (Peter Brown) and Corabelle (Ashley Frame) arrive at City Hall to submit their application for the mail contract only to find the clerk “Miss Plumply” (Linda Salatiello) in a tizzy over receiving “Not one but TWOOOOO applications” this year. She exclaimed to a friend over the dilemma, “Guess how many applications we got this year?... And people say we never work around here!”



The Mayor (Mark Kozielec) declares a steamboat race is the only way to resolve the issue of who will get the mail contract and the race is set for the same night at the musical talent show.

In the meantime Snavers (Dave Witham) instructs his henchman Julius (Andy Jepson) to disguise himself as dance instructor Miss Spew and kidnap Corabelle who is hoping to win \$1,000 during the Ladies Choral and Terpsichorean talent show being held on the Daughter of the Lake. Without the prize money Bilgely and his daughter can't afford to do dry rot repairs to the boat and Snavers' vessel, the Buchaneer, would be awarded the contract to deliver mail around the lake. Snavers concedes that keeping Corabelle from entering the contest might go against his good nature but sings, "I get up bright and early to practice to be surly and overcome my tendency to charm."

Julius, when delivering Snavers' application to City Hall, also discovers Miss Plumply is a long lost love of his and regrets having to kidnap Corabelle for fear it will turn Plumply against him. All of these twists and turns in the plot made for a night filled with laughter over their antics as resolutions to the problems are pursued.

Kinerk added a little Sanbornton touch to her production and the audience responded with a lot of laughter and applause. As Corabelle calls out for help while locked in the storage room of a Melvin P. Ossifer's Well-Known Waterfront Weirs Beach Saloon, she realizes it is hopeless.

"It's a rough crowd out there - a lot of drunkards. Most of them probably from Sanbornton," she sighed, as the audience roared over the good-hearted jab.

Kinerk also brought the audience into the show as Brazen Woman vamped her way through the audience, explaining why she had to give up little Dewberry and abandon him in Belmont long ago. Plumply, Ah Pun and Corabelle rowed their canoe through the crowd as they raced to catch up with the Daughter of the Lake so Corabelle could enter the competition and win the prize money. As the show came to a close everyone was invited to join in on the final refrains of “Lake Winnepesaukee.”



Snavers, Horace Dewberry and Brazen Creature share a family hug after Horace discovers they are the parents who abandoned him on the doorstep of a church in Belmont at the conclusion of “The Great Winnepesaukee Steamboat Race and Musical Talent Contest”.

Kinerk said it was an exciting adventure to work with the actors, some of whom had little to no theater experience.

“What they might have lacked in experience they made up for with their wonderful enthusiasm, and it was a lot of fun to direct them,” Kinerk said.

From ages 10 to 80, she said they all worked hard over the last few months not just in the performance, but to create the curtain-style backdrops that were changed throughout the play and designing the costumes. People from the community pitched in to assist and in the end produced a classic evening of old-fashioned fun. Filing out the door on Friday night, many people commented the show should become an annual event.

Others who participated were Bob Buress as the Postman, Gail Morrison as Mrs. Beresford, Julie

Dylingowski as Lottie, Miah Bailey as Amaryllis and Allison Rowley as Dora. Assisting on the crew were Paula Craig, Lillian Ochs, Jack Potter, Faith Tobin, Bill Tobin, Eveyn Auger, Becky Guyer and Jim Wells.