

The Great Kooshog Lake Hollis McCauley Fishing Derby – the cast is hooked

Summer will be here on the Shelburne stage in late February with Norm Foster's wonderful cottage country comedy about fishing and more...

Norm Foster's *The Great Kooshog Lake Hollis McCauley Fishing Derby* directed by Jean Jardine Miller will be performed during the last two weeks of February.

Darrick Rosborough is cast as the pompous investment banker who gets stranded for the weekend in the little town of Kooshog Lake. He is taught to fish by the contemptuous locals and takes part in their annual fishing derby celebrations. In fact, Darrick is the one cast member who does know how to fish so he will teach the rest of us!

Michelle Graham, who stage-managed the recent production of *The Trouble with Trent*, makes her Shelburne stage debut playing the cynical storekeeper, Sienna, whose son has left town. Singer-songwriter Sohayla Smith joins us for the first time as his one-time girlfriend who is still carrying a torch for him.

Kelly McDowell is the aggressive, yet insecure, multi-business-owner, who is a little over-enthusiastic in her attempts to attract a man, and Paul Welch is the wise old town patriarch.

In what Norm Foster himself describes as a "quirky, off-the-wall kind of comedy", these rather over-the-top characters combine to give the stranger some life lessons... and receive some themselves. Tickets can be purchased online at www.tiplingstagecompany.com and they make great stocking stuffers! Think about it!

The Trouble with Trent – stellar production!

Tipling Stage Company actors outdid themselves, once again, in bringing Fred Carmichael's *The Trouble with Trent* to performance level.

Newcomer GG Stillwell showed an inborn sense of timing in the role of the CIA operative disguised as a "silly, stupid" socialite. Bev Nicholas was hilarious as the beach-bum posing FBI agent, while Josh Oatman played the undisguised agent who just might be the blackmailer. Debbie Morris moved from claiming to be the beach house rental agent to a government agent to inadvertently unmasking herself to be the real blackmailer.

Jo Hubbard, Kelly MacDowell and Jean Jardine Miller played the three collaborating authors who are "Sarah Trent – mystery writer" and Sherry MacDonald was the literary agent



Re-invigorating the Tipling Stage Company

At a special meeting hosted by Denis and Irene Stephenson on November 12th, the following conclusions were reached.

- Despite a well developed publicity campaign incorporating newspaper and radio editorial and advertising, posters and online communication and advertising, attendance at our last presentation was poor, despite the high quality of the performances.
- We seem to have lost the sense of community involvement that was so evident in our initial years.
- The general sense of those present was that more popular, well-known plays should be presented.
- There was a divergent set of opinions on the presentation of musicals with extensive casting of children, the point being made that this is LP Stage Productions' mandate. There were also conflicting views on the presentation of musicals and pantomimes.
- Our executive was weakened by the loss of active members, Bob and Jane Turnbull indicating that they could once again become more active.

Town of Shelburne CAO/Clerk John Telfer indicated support from the Town including use of the volunteer website to attract more members. He also suggested that a three year schedule of productions should be developed and that Julie Thurgood's services as a marketing expert are acquirable if we can get sponsorship to pay for it. Current marketing activity has evolved from a Marketing Plan developed without charge, and approved by the Executive in 2011. The possibility of acquiring a Trillium Grant for audience development to cover the cost of such marketing was raised.

Contact Denis at denis.c.stephenson@gmail.com let him know your views and to give him an indication of the direction you think TSC should follow. He will summarize and present these to the Executive. There are three general alternatives which we could follow in our future program.

- Three productions per season - all of which would be stage plays.
- Three productions per season one of which would be a musical presentation with limited use of young people.
- Three productions per season one of which would be a musical with extensive use of young people, (including dance groups).

who gets them involved in a real-life mystery by claiming that it's no *non de plume*, but a real mystery-solving detective.

Returning to directing after a long hiatus, Denis Stephenson saw his commendable production effectively supported by its backstage crew – Michelle Graham, Debbie Morris, Josh Oatman and a great team of youth helpers.

Headwaters theatre groups move to develop co-ordinated strategies to get 'bums in seats'

The first meeting of headwaters theatre groups, initiated by Peter King, took place on September 24th and included Theatre Orangeville, Century Church Theatre Guild, Caledon Town Hall Players, Orangeville Music Theatre, Erin Theatre. Absent, but invited, were LP Stage Productions, Dundalk Little Theatre and Blackhorse Village Theatre.

Each group presented its overview, demonstrating, for the most part, marketing activities similar to our own. Observations on additional strategies were made during the discussion which followed, chiefly from David Nairn, Artistic Director, Theatre Orangeville, originating from his own experience:

- Identified primary market for theatre groups:
 - 45+ empty nesters.
- Reaching them:
 - Postal Code targeting.
 - Presenting vignettes at community events.
 - Tracking audiences to develop a list to offer subscription sales.
- Marketing activities that are mostly ineffective:
 - Targeting the lower age groups
 - Promotion around hockey and other sport activities.
 - Liquor licensing and beer sponsorship
- Possible incentives that do attract the wider audience:
 - A 'singles night' where there are facilities for 'meet and greet', refreshments, etc.
 - Babysitting where facilities are available.

It was agreed that the groups should work more closely together in promoting individual productions to their respective contact lists by supplying information, digital flyers, etc. to each contact person. Some, of course – ourselves included – were already doing so to some extent. A tentative date was set for the next meeting for January when it will be possible to see how the season is progressing.

HELP WANTED

THE GREAT KOOSHOG LAKE HOLLIS McCAULEY FISHING DERBY - February 18, 19, 20, 21, 26 & 27.

Musicians to perform fishing-oriented songs to complement the production before curtain up and/or during intermission. If you are available for one of these dates and/or would like more information, please contact Kelly at info@ashtonclarke.ca.

Front of house personnel for ushering and serving food and beverages during intermission. If you are available for one or more of these dates, please contact Debbie at debbie@debbietait.com.

SHELBURNE SANTA CLAUS PARADE

Anybody able to participate on Saturday, December 5th at 4:00 pm, email info@tiplingstagecompany.com ASAP.

YOUR STORIES for the March 2016 Newsletter should be sent to info@tiplingstagecompany by February 15th.

TSC president Jean Miller's overview of the group's positioning and marketing efforts given at the meeting is presented here for your information and to remind you of the reasons for the decisions made by the Executive and the Play Selection Committee over the past two or three years.

"The Tipling Stage Company was created, at the instigation of the Town of Shelburne, in 2008. We are now about to begin our eighth season. Through trial and error, we have found that our audiences have a preference for comedy, farce or storylines built around situations to which they can relate. Our play-reading committee is, for the most part, selecting plays meeting these specifications. These audiences are mostly mature, with younger patrons mainly attending in support of family members involved in the production. Our membership too, as with many community theatre groups, tends toward people from older age groups. We would like to work at targeting younger people in terms of both involvement in productions and as audience members. However, solidifying our position in the community is currently requiring a lot of effort and, as you will see, has priority.

*During the first few years, we were well supported both in terms of ticket sales and sponsorship dollars. However, around about our fourth season, we began to run into difficulties. Quite apart from the challenges we are all dealing with, i.e. the dwindling appreciation of theatre especially in the younger generations, there were two predominantly identifiable reasons for this that are obvious in retrospect. Now that they are identified, we are in the process of better positioning ourselves. **One**, by adding the phrase 'Shelburne Community Theatre' to our name since 'Tipling' unfortunately creates the perception locally that we're the organization running the hall while, to the wider community, it is a basically a mystery. **Two**, by not scheduling anything musical, including pantomimes, in an attempt to stem the confusion created by the musical theatre company using the same venue, which arrived in our community while we were still only beginning to establish ourselves.*

Publicity-wise, like most of you, we have a limited budget for paid advertising and rely heavily on manually placing brochures and posters in locations around the town and within a 40km radius of Shelburne, posting information on all the community events billboards on the internet to drive traffic to our website, and on regularly sending out press releases to both print and broadcast media. We issue quarterly newsletters to our members and maintain a very detailed website which includes an opt-in form for our news mailing list, which is contacted regularly, and links to our Facebook and Twitter accounts. There are currently around 420 Facebook likes displaying on the 'Facebook Likes' button on our website.

The resulting media impressions from all this activity, in Shelburne itself are very good with several of the area community newspapers picking up our news releases. However, this doesn't translate into ticket sales due, to a large extent, to the aforementioned issues that have caused confusion about who we are.

While we have problems to surmount other than the generally decreasing interest in community theatre, we truly appreciate this initiative of Peter's to see if we can help each other to reverse that particular trend."