

Kudos to the cast of 'The Drowsy Chaperone'

By DANIEL H. TRAFFORD

MATUNUCK — Theatre By The Sea wraps up its regular season with a nice unpretentious musical that brings back an old favorite of the Matunuck stage.

"The Drowsy Chaperone," though not as well known as the other offerings of Theatre By The Sea this season, is the perfect show for the little Matunuck stage.

THEATER REVIEW

The plot revolves around a middle-aged man — a fanatical devotee of musical theater — sitting alone in his apartment playing the soundtrack (on LP) of his favorite musical, a fictitious 1928 production called "The Drowsy Chaperone."

As he's listening to the music, the play comes to life in his cramped and cozy living room. This is where the intimacy of Theatre By The Sea pays off. It's as if the whole play were designed with this theater in mind.

Theatre By The Sea veteran Lennie Watts, who last performed on the Matunuck stage several years ago as Nicely Nicely Johnson in "Guys and Dolls," returns as the main character — the man listening to the music.

Always a Matunuck favorite, Watts is perfect as the theater lover whose quips, commentary and critique are interspersed throughout the action of the play. He gushes over his favorite parts, mercilessly trashes the lame parts and waxes philosophical over an audio problem in the recording.

He even takes a shot at Woonsocket just before intermission

when he complains about the way intermission pulls you out of the illusion of the play when you "have to spend 15 minutes standing around outside with people from Cranston and Woonsocket."

When the play resumes after intermission and he puts the second record on, it's the wrong soundtrack. His living room then comes alive with what's clearly a spoof of "The King and I" before he puts the right record back on.

On the whole, it's an extremely imaginative play, but what makes this particular production of it so wonderful is the perfect casting. In addition to Watts -- who is an absolute delight -- there's Happy McPartlin in the title role, as a veteran Broadway actress who needs to insert her own larger-than-life persona into every play does. Watts even takes time to explain that one song in the play was written exclusively as a vehicle for her and has virtually nothing to do with the plot of the play.

Equally compelling is Erin West, who plays the show's ingenue, a Broadway sensation who's leaving the stage to marry a wealthy, care-free man about town, played with hammy delight by Sean Montgomery.

Stealing the show is Tony Castellanos, who plays the Latin lover with broad 1920s stereotypes and a bordering-on-offensive accent, something that's also ridiculed by Watts' character.

Rhode Island's own Ron Sarro is great as the scheming Broadway producer who's trying to stop the marriage and lure his leading woman back to the stage.

In his shadow is an aspiring actress who dotes on him, yet can't seem to impress him. She's played by Arielle Cook, who's made a name



Lennie Watts, standing right, as the die-hard musical theater fan identified as Man in Chair, imagines a scene from his favorite musical in which Erin West, seated, as Janet Van De Graaff, explains to the press why she is giving up the stage to get married, in the Theatre By The Sea production of 'The Drowsy Chaperone.' Members of the press are, from left, Nathan Chang, Nicole Calabrese, Amanda Kouri and Mike Baskowski.

for herself interning this season at Theatre By The Sea.

The most outstanding part of this play is just how good everyone is. Every actor in it is a triple threat, equally adept at acting, singing and dancing. Montgomery, for instance, plays the role of the bridegroom with wonderful comedic timing, but you don't expect him to blow you away

with his singing, which he does. And if that isn't enough, he breaks into a tap dance with fellow actor Kevin Loreque, who plays the best man, that's reminiscent of Gene Kelly and Donald O'Connor.

The whole play is wonderful, creative, unpretentious entertainment. The play-within-a-play format allows the actors to keep their

tongues firmly in their cheeks and never take themselves too seriously. It's the perfect way to wrap up the season.

"The Drowsy Chaperone" is on stage through Sept. 4. Tickets are \$39-\$54 at the box office Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at (401) 782-8587 or online at www.theatrebythesea.com.

Cumberland girl models for StyleWeek's 'Go Red Challenge'

By KATHIE RALEIGH
Lifestyle Editor

Arts Center, 220 Weybosset St., headquarters for StyleWeek Providence events.

Girls between the ages of 8 and 13 have been paired with StyleWeek designers who will create original red outfits inspired by the girls' personalities.

Caitlin E. Levesque, 9, of Cumberland, daughter of Shannon and Scott Levesque, will be one of the models, and she will wear an outfit created by designer and "Project Runway" contestant Jonathan Joseph Peters, a Woonsocket native.

"We met a couple times



Caitlin Levesque

with Jonathan, and she said 'yes' to everything," says Caitlin's mom.

"Do you like sparkles?" Peters asked.

"Yes," Caitlin said.

"Glitter?"

"Yes."

"Ruffles?"

"Yes."

At this point, however, Caitlin hasn't seen her outfit.

Caitlin, who is entering the fourth grade at Cumberland Hill Elementary School, was born with a heart defect that required three cardiac catheterizations as an infant and two open-heart surgeries, including one last summer to

replace a valve in her heart.

"She's doing great now," Shannon says. "We like to say, 'If you didn't know, you wouldn't know.'"

For several years, Caitlin and her family have participated in fundraising events for the Southern New England Chapter of the American Heart Association, including the Jump Rope for Heart. Caitlin also was the featured child at the association's Heart Ball in June.

"This is our second show benefiting the America Heart Association," said Rosanna Ortiz Sinel, founder and president of StyleWeek

Providence. The first challenge, held in January, sold out.

"It's been wonderful for our team and all the designers to work with the adult and young survivors. This experience has moved and changed all of us," Sinel said.

Tickets are available at styleweekprovidence.com/little-hearts-big-love. Front-row seats are \$150, preferred seating (on stage) is \$75, and mezzanine seating is \$40.

Tickets also are available to the public for the designers' shows all next week. For details, visit styleweekprovidence.com.

2nd Story

Continued from Page D-1
her thoughts as she recalls parts of her life or replays performances in her head. As recordings play, Callas gives us the operatic play-by-play, her words drawing us into the music and the emotion.

Gloria Crist, as Callas is in the spotlight the entire time, and she is mesmerizing.

The dominating stage

presence is just the start of her immersion in her character. She doesn't sing, but her emotional pitch is perfect.

The "victims" do sing, and 2nd Story found three real-life theater/vocal students to play the parts.

Stephanie Morgan is a 2011 graduate of the University of Rhode Island.

Jacqueline Pina is a Rhode Island College graduate — who studies with Metropolitan Opera soprano Maria Spacagna, a Rhode Islander familiar to area audiences.

Josh Christensen is a senior at URI majoring in theater.

All three are colorful and, obviously, authentic.

Bob Colonna has a brief but unforgettable scene as the crude, insulting Onassis, appearing on stage as a figure in Callas' memory.

He makes us squirm, and McNally leaves it to us to speculate on what attracted Callas to him.

The set is a realistic practice room, complete with

piano and a self-effacing accompanist, Charlie Elder.

The bright lighting on stage is as unforgiving as the diva most of the time, but dims except for a spotlight, a literal one this time, on Crist when Callas is transported by her memories — all very effective.

The whole package, from script to execution, is visually, mentally and emotionally engaging.

That's what theater is all about, and this "Master Class" is masterful.

But time is running out. Performances of "Master Class" are scheduled only through Sept. 3 at 2nd Story Theatre, 28 Market St., so don't delay.

Curtain is Wednesday at 7 p.m., Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m., with one matinee, this Sunday at 3 p.m.

Tickets are \$27 at the box office, by calling (401) 247-4200 or by e-mailing boxoffice@2ndStoryTheatre.com.

TEAMMATES



Photo courtesy of Stage Right

Stage Right, Studio for Arts and Wellness, 68 South Main St., Woonsocket, hosts a 'Dream Cabaret' on Saturday at 8 p.m., with partial proceeds going to the American Cancer Society's Making Strides Against Breast Cancer campaign. Admission is \$10, half of which will be donated to Tee Rie's Team, led by four-year breast cancer survivor Marie Hendrickson, center, with teammates Mary Concannon, left, and Connie Anderson. The 'Dream Cabaret' gives vocalists a chance to sing songs they've always dreamed of singing and always has a fundraising purpose. Last month, the cabaret raised more than \$200 for the Keri Anne O'Donnell Scholarship Fund. In November, the cabaret will benefit and annual Milk Fund effort. For tickets, call Stage Right at (401) 356-0255.

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