

Earth Day Expo



MATTHEW COLE/BALTIMORE SUN MEDIA GROUP
Mike Strawbridge of Bayside Summer Camp lets Samira Gibson, 13, of Severn handle a corn snake during the annual Earth Day Expo held April 15 at Quiet Waters Park in Annapolis.

A golden anniversary takes the stage

Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre launches 50th year with shows and celebration

By MARY JOHNSON
For The Baltimore Sun

Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre is marking its 50th season — a milestone few theater companies reach — with a series of celebratory events.

The festivities begin May 7 with an anniversary gala, where guests can take part in an evening of food, drink, memories and fun, and enjoy a revival of the first musical produced by the organization.

“Brigadoon,” directed by David Merrill, will feature Tom Magette, John Halmi, Molly Green and Ashley Gladden, and will be performed at William Paca House and Gardens, site of the theater’s 1966 inaugural season. Tickets to the event, to be held from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., are \$150 per person (available at summergarden.com).

An all-star musical retrospective in September will cap off the 50th-anniversary celebration, but in between, ASGT will stage three big musicals: “The Wedding Singer,” “Rent” and “The Producers.”

Only one other Annapolis theater has reached the 50-year milestone: Colonial Players is in its 67th season.

Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre is led by volunteers and has no paid staff. It relies on support from hundreds of volunteer actors, crew, ushers and others each summer.

Theater President Carolyn Kirby is herself a longtime volunteer, and a board member since 1992. She said she’s excited not only for the season, but for the opportunity to celebrate the organization’s volunteer spirit.

“Celebrating our 50th season will include looks back at our history by a historical video incorporating actual scenes from shows over the past 50 summers, along with key players’ reminiscences,” she said.

ASGT has staged every show at its outdoor location at 143 Compromise St. — across from City Dock — since moving there in 1988. During that time, its identity has been shaped under the stars.

Sets must be designed to withstand sun,



ANNAPOLIS SUMMER GARDEN THEATRE
Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre President Carolyn Kirby (back to camera) strategizes a project with a group of volunteer staff. The theater’s 50th season will begin May 7 with a production of “Brigadoon.”

heat, wind and rain; sets must be struck and new ones created in brief days between shows, while the sound system must be able to compete with the surrounding city noises.

It’s a challenging venue, and the theater’s success there is a testament to the thousands of volunteers who have risen to countless challenges over the years. And as the volunteers have stretched their collective creativity, they have invigorated the Annapolis arts community.

“The Wedding Singer” opens the season May 26 and runs through June 18. The story tells of New Jersey wedding singer Robbie Hart, who, after being left at the altar by his fiancée, turns his affections to a winsome waitress — with attendant complications. Director Mark Briner says the show pays homage to the over-the-top silliness of the

1980s — it’s a musical valentine to a decade of pop music.

The cast features Austin Jacobs as Robbie, with the role of Julia Sullivan split by actresses Hayley Briner and Layne Seaman. Other players include Fred Fletcher-Jackson, Robbie Dinsmore, Ashley Gladden, Jeff Hawkins, Hannah Thornhill and Phyllis Everette.

The midseason show, the groundbreaking musical “Rent,” will open June 30 and run through July 23. This production marks the 20th anniversary of the show’s Broadway premiere. With book, music, and lyrics by the late Jonathan Larson, “Rent” became a pop phenomenon that won the Tony Award for best musical and Pulitzer Prize for drama, and was also one of Broadway’s longest running shows.

Loosely based on Puccini’s “La Boheme”

and set in the East Village of New York City, “Rent” follows a year in the life of a group of impoverished artists struggling to cope with drug addiction, poverty and HIV/AIDS.

The season closes with Mel Brooks’ hit “The Producers,” a hysterical romp through the insane world of fictional producers Max Bialystock and Leo Bloom, who set out to produce a lucrative flop on Broadway. Their resulting show, “Springtime for Hitler,” is guaranteed to be an “equal opportunity offender” — and also guaranteed to bring laughter-filled evenings for Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre audiences. The show runs Aug. 4 through Sept. 4.

For ticket information and more details on the 50th-anniversary season of Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre, go to summergarden.com.

EXHIBITS

STORMY WEATHER Artwork featuring the sights, sounds, impact and anticipation of weather. Runs through May 1 at Annapolis Maritime Museum, 723 Second St., Annapolis. Information: 410-295-0104.

‘AMERICAN IMPRESSIONISM’ is on view through Sunday, April 24, at the Mitchell Gallery of St. John’s College, 60

College Ave., Annapolis. Information: 410-626-2539.

ART ON PAPER EXHIBITION Maryland Federation of Art’s 39th annual juried exhibit of artwork. Runs through April 30 at MFA Circle Gallery, 18 State Circle, Annapolis. Information: 410-268-4566.

MAIN STREET GALLERY Works in oil by

Janice Antinucci and Kathy Daywalt, watercolor by Merla Tootle. Runs through April 30 at Main St. Gallery, 216A Main St., Annapolis. Call 410-216-7166.

‘DEEP ROOTS, RISING WATERS’ A permanent exhibit that provides an overview of African-American history in Maryland from 1633 to the present is on view at the

Banneker-Douglass Museum, 84 Franklin St. in Annapolis. Free admission. Information: 410-216-6180 or bannekerdouglassmuseum@gmail.com.

MARITIME ART Works by Heinke Bohnert are on display at the Annapolis Marine Art Gallery, 110 Dock St., Annapolis. Information: annapolismarineart.com.