



Bet 10 bucks theater group's having fun

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BREWER – When the call came to participate in the first production of the Ten Bucks Theater Company, Allen Adams was ready with his answer:

“Great. When do we start?”

The grass-roots group of nine made its start recently at Brewer Middle School with Tom Stoppard’s “The Real Inspector Hound.”

“It’s been ages since I had that much fun on stage,” Adams commented after the brief run.

That’s pretty much the reaction of everyone involved with the fledgling troupe, who had no idea whether the first offering – a comic takeoff of an Agatha Christie-type mystery – would be well-received. It was.

“It was really great, the number of people who showed up,” said Bob Libbey.

“They put on a wonderful show,” remarked Kent McKusick, founding director of Northern Lights Theatre in Bangor.

“It was a real pleasure to see people who are artistic professionals start a new endeavor. There is an incredible talent pool in the community,” McKusick said.

“A lot of us hang out,” Libbey explained. “We’re all friends. We thought, why not try to produce a play ourselves? We know Rich Kimball. He had said in the past he would help us out finding space.”

Kimball, who is vice principal of Brewer Middle School, offered the school’s auditorium, a medium-sized room with a stage, floor space and a balcony.

“It’s a great space,” Libbey said.

Besides Allen and Libbey, the acting troupe included Julie Arnold Lisnet, Ron Adams, Dave Sperry, Catherine Leclair, Rebecca Cook and Kenny Volock, and Sharon Zolper as director.

Doctors from Eastern Maine Medical Center in Bangor also put in an appearance, taking turns playing the corpse that spends most of the play facedown on the stage.

Laugh followed laugh as the plot rolled along, with suspicion cast on this character and that, and even the critics, played by Libby and Volock, winding up as part of the story.

The play wasn’t long, so the group offered David Ives’ “Sure Thing” as an appetizer, with Adams and Cook as a man and woman who show the importance of timing ” as they keep replaying their first meeting.

The formation of the theater company itself could be a play, it seems.

Because it comprised individuals with so much experience in a variety of plays, perhaps it was

inevitable that the group would start thinking about what they could do together.

“Rebecca and I were talking, and we said, ‘well, let’s do something,’” Lisnet recalled. Then Lisnet had dinner with Libbey and LeClair, and the subject came up again.

“This is the most excited I’ve been about anything theater-related – ever,” Lisnet said. “It’s the ability to work with folks I have the utmost respect for.”

“It was a fantastic experience,” agreed Ron Adams. “It was a little grass-roots effort, now we’ll take it to another level. I did sound design, some set work. Even if I’m not in the show, that’s all right.” Participants took on different aspects of the show, and what’s more, invested some of their own money for advertising and other startup costs. Tickets were just \$10 each, but the show did well financially.

“We paid ourselves back and had enough left to do another show, maybe later this spring,” Libbey said. “We have no infrastructure, but at the same time, we have no overhead, either.”

Sharon Zolper sees herself first as an actor, but enjoyed directing the group in the ensemble piece, “Inspector Hound.”

“It was a brain wave to do that play as a group,” she said. “It was almost like it had been written for them. We all knew each other so well, there was a great sense of trust and bonding.

“We didn’t have backup personnel, so we had to share all the behind-the-scenes work. We were very fortunate to have the assistance of Joan Warren on sets, and of Rich Kimball” in getting the space, Zolper said.

The group is hoping that the next production will be Philip King’s “See How They Run” in early summer.

“We’d all really like to jump right back on,” Allen Adams said.

“We’re always going to look for things that play to our strength,” Lisnet added. “We want to further ourselves as artists, but we also want the audience to come along on our great adventure.”

McKusick heartily approves.

“The more arts are available to this community, the more the community will embrace the arts, which is good for all of us,” he said. “I wish them the best and hope to collaborate with them, when possible.”

Those interested in participating in Ten Bucks Theater Company may call 990-4940.

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