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‘Fame Takes a Holiday’ opens in Northport

By Staff

NORTHPORT (July 9): Northport Music Theater on Route 1 has opened its 2008 summer season with “Fame Takes a Holiday.” The show was first produced by la Mama Experimental Theatre Club in association with Watson Arts New York City in 2000.

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Written by Cassandra Danz, Mary Fulham and Warren Leight, “Fame” is the story of the High Heeled Women, a four-girl cabaret act having the two worst nights of their show biz lives. Onstage, they perform a tight-knit madcap comedy revue; backstage, they struggle desperately to keep their act together.

Clever lyrics and tunes include a notable Edith Piaf parody (“Je Ne Regroust Rien”) and a torch song in which a jilted Jane, attired in a leopard cocktail dress, yearns for the return of her lothario, Tarzan. Satire reigns as the troupe sings and dances through an imitation of a Busby Berkeley dance routine; an Andrews Sisters take-off of the WACS really winning World War II (with the secret help of Eleanor Roosevelt); a parody of classical music by Beverly Sills and the Dying Swans titled “Ballet for All Ages and Boys, Too”; and an exciting routine by “Estrogen Gilberto” and the IUDayos giving meaningful contraception advice. By play’s end, the High Heeled Women have lost everything, including their clothing, but they have learned the true meaning of success.



Northport Music Theater’s season-opening show features, from left, Kim Murphy, Alyssa Manzi, Dagny Ernest and Annie Watson. The show runs through July 20. (Photo by Alex Morrow)

The “Fame” troupe features talented local performers including Kim Murphy of Lincolnville, who plays the role of Polly, the leader. Murphy is the choral director at Camden Hills Regional High School and performed in NMT’s premiere season as one of the “Six Women with Brain Death.” Director of the newly formed NMT Musical Theater Camps, Murphy is the recipient of the Main Music Educators Association District III 2007 Teacher of the Year Award.

Dagny Ernest of Thomaston plays Dee Dee, the skit writer. Ernest, a veteran of Midcoast stages, made her NMT

debut in last year's "Musical of Musicals." She has performed with Lincoln Street Center's Umbrella Theatre Project, Girl Power Productions, Heartwood Regional Theater Company, Waldo Theatre, Camden Civic Theatre, the Arthur Hall International Dance Company and more. She also sang with the Belfast-based swing quartet Fascinatim' Rhythm.

Annie Watson of Lincolnville plays Crystal, the glamour girl who betrays the troupe. She is a 2005 graduate of Brown University, where she received her bachelor of arts degree in theater arts. Watson, who performed with Murphy in last year's "Six Women with Brain Death," co-owns Watson-Moody Construction, an earthwork and trucking company, with her partner Michael Moody.

Alyssa Manzi of Camden plays the role of Lavender Lane, "everyone's friend," in the troupe and is making her Northport Music Theater debut. She is a student at University of Maine at Orono majoring in vocal performance and belongs to three different vocal groups: The University Singers, which just returned from a singing tour of Italy; Renaissance, an all-female a cappella group; and Euphony, a select mixed voice choir specializing in modern a cappella music.

Peter Clain of Stockton Springs, director of last season's "Six Women," is the "Fame" director. He is a retired teacher of Spanish and continues to direct the high school drama program at Bucksport High School. Clain has been involved in theater for many years as both an actor and director for the Penobscot Theater Company, Winterport Open Stage, Assembled Players, Bucksport Community Theater and the Belfast Maskers.

Music direction is by John Gelsinger with NMT artistic director Ruth Gelsinger filling in as pianist for the nightclub cabaret act. Founders of Northport Music Theater, they have worked professionally as performers, directors and teachers of voice and piano in the Midcoast for the past 30 years.

Choreography is by Keith Robinson, a former professional dancer with the Ballet Classique de Paris and Athens Ballet Theater in Athens, Greece. Robinson teaches ballet at University of Maine at Orono, Belfast Dance Studio and the School of the Robinson Ballet. He and his wife, Maureen, are artistic directors of the Bangor-based Robinson Ballet. This is his second season at NMT.

There will be a total of 15 performances during the course of three weeks. Shows run 7:30 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday evenings and 3:30 p.m. Sundays through July 20. Tickets are \$26, \$21 for the matinees, and can be purchased by calling 338-8383 or ordered online with PayPal at northportmusictheater.com.

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