

EVENTS

Behind the scenes of a fundraiser in the making

By Cindy Walker
Contributor

“It’s early,” I think, though several cars line the lengthy drive that leads up to what once was the famous Loramoor Stables.

Hastening toward the house, I can’t help but notice the huge clocktower at the top and center of the renovated dwelling before me. Through the glass door entrance I can see Marie Martin who’s been managing the schedule of events taking place here the night of the Fifth Annual Twin Oaks Shelter Benefit, which is Saturday, Oct. 19.

She’s also been managing the steady stream of actors, actresses, stagehands, musicians and others who arrive at her home to participate in this unique fundraising campaign—a three act musical comedy.

“Hi, Marie. I’m not last, am I?”

“Not at all,” Marie says. “Go on in and see what everyone’s up to—and help yourself to coffee or sodas in the kitchen.”

Another set of glass doors lead to the 250-seat auditorium where the chairs are arranged around a wooden stage platform.

Joe Martin is keyboarding his way around one of his original songs, explaining various accents and details.

Beth Schaefer (Sweet Sugar Candy) and Dan Baughman (Boffo) are on the stage rehearsing a song together, interspersed with various comments and direction.

During a short break, Dan Baughman of Delavan tells me: “It’s the first role I’ve ever played where I get beat up—really bad!”

He’s also very impressed with the complications of this show. “Joe’s outdone himself and people will really get their money’s worth,” he assures.

Beth Schaefer is a talented 17-year-old who was recently featured in an hour-long radio broadcast, “Beth Schaefer in Concert.” Beth’s mom, Trish, is also here, to sing the feature solo act three.

Another teen-ager appears on the scene—Katy Hanny. She’s one of the “wood nymphs.” Katy comes from a family of theatrical artists. “The year I was in fourth grade our entire family tried out for the musical ‘Annie’ with the Lakeland Players. I got the lead and my two sisters received parts, as well.”

One of Martin’s five sons, Dennis, and his musical entourage, have their equipment set up and are learning all of the original songs his father dreamed up for the show. Dennis has been playing guitar, piano and keyboards since he was 10. His group, DAT has performed at places like Chicago’s Summerfest.

Back out in the foyer area stage manager Larry Whiting talks with assistant Larry Waller about special lighting needed for the show.

Whiting wants to know if I’m the person who typed Joe’s script. “Yes,” I admit.

“You’ve helped more than you know,” he says. “Last time we had three different sets of scribble

that I finally gave up on and threw out!”

After a moment’s laughter he adds: “The last part of the script is ready for you to type—it’s a little rough though.”

Larry then hands me a xeroxed mass of papers with what appears to be several handwriting styles on it. “Scribble’s my forte!” I quip. “I’ll get it back to you right away.”

I make my way up the curved stairs and into the kitchen where some of the cast and crew are exchanging anecdotes from past performances. Marie introduces me to Bruce Weaver who plays Porterfield in the show. Bruce has been involved in theater on and off since high school and had the lead role in “Do Black Patent Leather Shoes Really Reflect Up” at the Woodstock Opera House.

That’s where he met JaNelle Powers of Lake Geneva, who will be playing the Ethel part in this production, across from Bill Gorgo who plays Willy.

“Details are added through the course of each rehearsal,” says Baughman. “Adding a facial expression, a gesture, a lighting cue, a step to the right or left, until it all comes together the night of the show—it’s a great experience.”

It looks as though I’m hooked—already I can see that a more polished version of the script will be needed (that’s where I come in), to provide the details each person here adds at the rehearsals. It’ll be a privilege to see first-hand how the outline script I initially typed emerges into a full-fledged musical production.