



LOCKED IN each others arms are Amy Astoske (Nellie Oudt) and Bob Poulk Jr. (Roger B. Upright) during Friday night's performance of "Klondike Kalamity" at Southport.



WHEN UPRIGHT (Bob Poulk Jr.), left, once again wears his Canadian mountie uniform, he makes a move to stop villain Fangduster Barrelbottom (Steve Fitzgerald), right, in Act III.

'Klondike Kalamity' Leaves Audience And Cast Laughing

BY TERRY POPE

It was like watching Benny Hill go to work in the Canadian wilderness. Just mix a little slapstick along with some tongue-twisting one-liners and you have two nights of fun and laughter at Southport's City Hall for the Brunswick Players' production of "Klondike Kalamity."

The melodrama written by Gary Peterson and David Byrne took a few unexpected turns during the first presentation Friday night, but the result was not "kalamitous." In fact, it allowed both the audience and the performers to have a little fun in a play where the worst that could possibly go wrong would be met with laughter anyway.

For example, the audience roared when the show's "venomous villain," Fangduster T. Barrelbottom VIII, played by Steve Fitzgerald, lost his rattail moustache while delivering a line about, what else, but Farley Goodbody's (Erinn Fitzgerald) flimsy disguise.

"Your disguise will not only fall off your face just like mine is doing," Fitzgerald continued and tugged at his moustache. Fitzgerald placed it on the kitchen cupboard and continued "sans moustache" amid a round of applause. "Enough of that folks," he exclaimed, and went straight into his lines.

That is the magic of community theater. Even the audience was invited, or coaxed, into joining the play by providing the sound effects—an occasional "boo," a "hurrah" now and then, and plenty of "ahh's." It was like reviving the silent movies once again where the whole town turns out to cheer on the hero and to help defeat the villain to the tunes provided by the piano player in the corner, Dick Conrad.

"Klondike Kalamity" takes place in the Canadian wilderness during a blizzard that forces an odd group to huddle together in the Oudt (out) house. A freelance

lumberjack named Warren Oudt (Ken Campbell) must share his cabin with his beautiful daughter Nellie (Amy Astoske) and the drifters that wander in out of the cold.



STUART CALLARI, left, not only played the role of Chief Wapakonetta, but was also the play's director for the weekend presentation. Ken Campbell, right, played the role of Warren Oudt, the lumberjack father.

The drifters include a "dismounted mountie" named Roger B. Upright (Bob Poulk Jr.); the villain played by Fitzgerald; Oudt's long-lost wife disguised as Farley Goodbody and Chief Wapakonetta (Stuart Callari) who is on the warpath seeking the man who burned his, or her, Indian village. You see, Stuart is a female dressed in chief's clothing.

Also making stops at the Oudt house are Gwendolyn Oudt (Jane Astoske), a forgotten daughter; Prince Knook (Dale Hare), a pipe-smoking Eskimo who studied at a famous east coast university, either N.C. State or Carolina, he can't decide; Justice Dunn (Pat Connaughton), a judge that decides the villain's fate and Bruno (Brian Mintz), a flapjack-loving bear that builds a friendship with Nellie.

The play's success was built on its excellent casting and contrasting characters. Campbell, as Warren Oudt, seems right at home in the 1888 log cabin, throwing out phrases like "bidrigging bag of soybeans," "I'd rather trust a rabbit to deliver my lettuce," or "Oh, my silo hedgehogs" with only the slightest damage to his tongue. It was another excellent performance from the Southport attorney who also starred in the Players' last production, "Annie Get Your Gun."

Poulk as the frozen Canadian mountie, whom Nellie "can see his pure heart in his eyes," shows his versatility by making quite a turn from his role as the wild Indian

chief in "Annie Get Your Gun."

His innocent face pictured next to the innocent face of Amy Astoske (Nellie Oudt) surely makes a couple on stage. Ms. Astoske's performance as the light of everyone's life, not an easy role since she is the only main character that is not allowed to shed her shell on stage, shone as brightly as her golden curls.

But like it or not, Fitzgerald as Barrelbottom plays the villain's role to perfection. It's hard to believe that this is the same guy that was courting sweet Annie Oakeley in the Players' last performance.

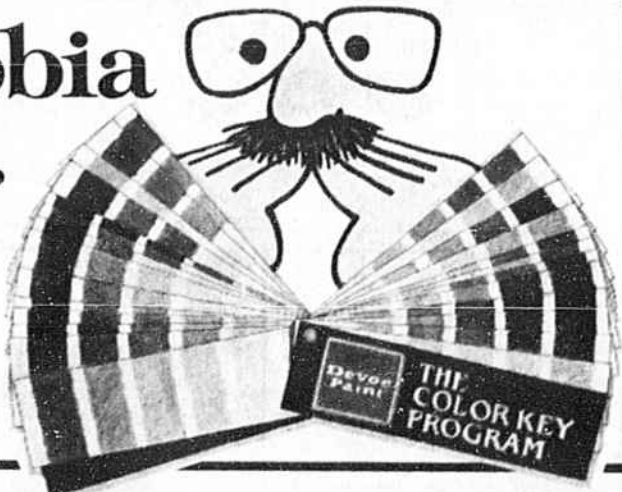
It's a shame the audience did not get to see Laura Hare as Farley Goodbody, the woman in disguise, due to sickness. Ms. Hare made her sparkling debut in the Players' last production as Annie. But give Erinn Fitzgerald a hand for doing an excellent job of stepping in and playing the small, but very important role, in Ms. Hare's absence.

That leaves us with Chief Wapakonetta, the snowblind and homeless Indian played by Stuart Callari, who simply does an excellent job in not only playing the comic-relief role, but in directing the entire cast as well.

With such talent assembled on stage last weekend, it should be safe to say that "not one single, solitary sole within miles" of Southport's City Hall left without having laughed and enjoyed another fine performance from The Brunswick Players.

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