

Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival returns to its roots

By Kathryn Reed

Shakespeare is back – *really* back.

Last season the Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival did not put on a full play of William Shakespeare. While officials say the abridged version of his work that was staged was well received by audiences, plenty of others stayed away because it wasn't a true Shakespeare play.

"Twelfth Night" will be performed in July and August on the shores of Lake Tahoe at Sand Harbor in Incline Village. Officials have their fingers crossed the economy will continue to improve and a second play will be added in 2012 as has been the norm in prior years.



Karen Buranch
as Julia Child
in 2010.
Photos/Kathryn
Reed

"It's going to be a wonderful show. It's full of great costumes and great music," said Daphne Lange, marketing director for the festival. "I think people will enjoy the return to traditional Shakespeare."

The actors have Mondays off. Festival organizers hope to fill in those days with other events. So far the Reno Philharmonic is booked for July 18. A Chautauqua performance will be part of the playbill Aug. 8.

Chautauqua is when a performer is dressed as a historical figure and shares stories about the character's life. Ginny Liebner Yates organizes the Chautauqua group that comes to Tahoe. Last year it was titled Hot Dogs to Haute Cuisine. It was appropriately named as husband-wife Gene and Karen Buranch took on the persons of Babe Ruth and Julia Child.

Dressed as if they were these American icons and with a minimalist setting of a kitchen of sorts for Julia Child, and a beer and baseball bat for Babe Ruth, it was almost as though they were really the people they were playing. This is because they are more than actors; they are historians and must know their character beyond the role.

As is the norm with Chautauqua, the actors stay in character to take questions from the audience – answering from the perspective of the character and in the time period they were alive. So no questions about steroids in baseball could be asked.



Gene Buranch
as Babe Ruth.

This summer Karen Buranch will be back. Doug Watson will be her partner. They will be playing Western outlaw Belle Star and cowboy Will Rogers.

Changes at the venue this year include the lower gallery – aka beach chair section – will be assigned seating. This means not longer having to queue up hours before the performance.

The upper gallery will have beach chairs provided, though people can still bring blankets to sit on.

The entire venue seats 1,200 people.

Lange said the menu will be changing, but didn't have specifics just yet.

Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival's website has more information. Tickets for some performances are on sale now.