

# Theater season in S. Lake launches with laughter

By Kathryn Reed

Small stage, older audience, limited talent pool, not a ton of money. Community theater can be limiting.

But those factors were not noticeable to those who on Friday night attended the debut of the summer theater season at the Boathouse Theatre. "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)" will be staged at the South Shore theater for five more nights.

This is the third season the Valhalla Festival of Arts has put on three plays. Much of it has to do with them being moneymakers. The nearly 160-seat theater was almost sold-out Friday.

"We want interesting, well-written pieces, but we also need something that entertains people," Ginger Nicolay Davis, president of the Tahoe Tallac Association, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "One of the biggest challenges is to pick the right material."



"The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)" is very much a farce that keeps the

audience laughing.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

She is reading a dozen scripts now for next year's season.

When it comes to picking a play, the size of the venue is a huge criterion. A play that features multiple actors won't work. Nor will elaborate sets because of the limited stage area.

Seeing the same actors in play after is play is common in a small town. Because those in the local theater business know each other, they know who can do what. That's why when it comes time to select a play the decision-makers do so knowing who might be able to play which part.

A desire to have a family-friendly play is also part of the mix.

"For next year I'm already reading family-friendly shows that perhaps we could cast kids in as well," Davis said.

This version of Shakespeare was chosen to appeal to younger community members. While there were youngsters in the audience July 5, some of the material is not appropriate for little kids.

It's a fun play with some Tahoe references woven in.

"I think this Shakespeare is really family friendly, but it is PG-13. It is Three Stooges meets Shakespeare," Dave Hamilton said of this comedic play.

Hamilton is in his first season as festival director. But he is intimately familiar with the venue, the people and festival as a whole. He co-wrote the highly popular "Guilty Pleasures", has been on the Tahoe Tallac Association board and is the former theater arts director at Lake Tahoe Community College.

"Everyone of us has a pretty significant background," Hamilton

told *Lake Tahoe News*.

But the actors aren't getting paid.

Valhalla – or any theater company – can't just put on any play they want. They must pay for the rights to the play. Something like "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)" runs about \$1,200 because it's based on a percentage of proceeds. A play from the 1950s or '60 might have a flat fee of about \$500.

And while the 2013 season has just begun, decisions about 2014's shows will be made in a matter of months.

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#### **Valhalla festival plays:**

- "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)" July 6-7, July 11-13.
- "Motherhood Out Loud" July 18-21.
- "Better Late" Aug. 1-4.

More info about these shows and the entire festival may be found online.