

A Little of This, A Little of That

By Kate Ross

From spark to ignition, mere thought to production, add community involvement and voila, Theater Works! For the past month, Theater Works occupied the Listening Room in the Middlesex Town Hall. Thanks to John Puleio who helped organize the events that culminated with a production workshop on Aug. 16 - 17.

The Listening Room is a production of Rumney Community Connections. The goal at the Listening Room is to create a local venue for community events and the performing arts. This entertainment venue provides a service for local performers allowing space and time to present their work. Their focus becomes the love of the art form as opposed to administrative production headaches. Theater Works at the Listening Room is a collaborative effort between theater professionals, community members and Rumney Community Connections. One of the motives for Rumney Community Connections is to provide programming for adults. This summer Theater Works at the Listening Room achieved this goal for at least 20 community members.

Middlesex resident Larry Becker and Montpelier residents Peter Lind and Beth Burgess participated in the workshops and final production workshop. Ms. Burgess who last acted in high school was lured in due to the expertise and coaxing of the workshop leaders. Her growth and excitement during the project was obvious. Several U-32 and Montpelier high school students and alumni, including Kohl Comtess, Lily Weis, and Danny Bick participated in the workshops.

Neighboring community members, Jenifer Tuck, Ramona Godfrey, and Hailey Rice were hooked by the word 'audition' on advertising posters and intrigued by the idea of performing a new play. One actress, Grace Kiley, a member of the Actors Equity Association received a waiver to be in the production. Stage platforms brought from Rumney, light poles from Doty, lights borrowed from Waterbury Center resident/performer George Woodard, and carpentry provided by Alan Erdossy of Worcester, were just some of the volunteer community efforts that helped create a month of quality theatrical learning experience.

Beginning with eight hours of acting workshops facilitated by New York City theater professional, Alan Wynroth, twelve participants ranged in age from high school students to adults, some having previous acting experience, some not. Mr. Wynroth directed and acted in the theater for over 30 years on Broadway, Off-Broadway and Off-Off-Broadway and directed locally at Lost Nation Theater. Somewhat simultaneously, Mr. Wynroth's wife, playwright, Jean Reynolds led writers in a playwriting workshop. Ms. Reynolds won a Kennedy Center Award for "The Last Intimacy" developed at Lost Nation Theater. Other awards to her credit include The Beverly Hills Theater Guild and Playwright's First. Over four evenings, writers discussed style and mechanics with Ms. Reynolds, then during the week, each wrote a play. At the last meeting, local actors read the newly created scripts to the eager writers.

Mr. Wynroth thinks of theater as a 'basic human event' and believes in the process of developing a play. He directed seven actors (five women and two men) in the production workshop, Ms. Reynolds' play *Good Girls*. In a small town in upstate New York a former town member returns after an 18-year absence to reveal a mysterious past. All seven actors remained on stage throughout the play to create a feeling of community. For a first time adventure, the audience and participants appeared to have fun and learn a great deal about producing a play beginning with playwriting.

Plans are afoot for theatrical workshops and master classes this winter and next summer at the Listening Room. If you're interested in being on the mailing list, please contact the Rumney Community Connections office at 223-1997.

Again thank you to Rumney Community Connections and Theater Works at the Listening Room and especially John Puleio, Site Coordinator for Rumney Community Connections for creating a theatrical reality. Bravo!