

It's Got Groove, It's Got Meaning

Written by Margaret Evans, Editor
Tuesday, 26 August 2014 14:24

'Grease' is the word at the USCB Center for the Arts.



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If you happened to be a 14-year-old girl when the movie *Grease* was released, chances are you're still lugging it around in your cultural suitcase. I can't speak for those who were older or younger at the time (1978), but for my friends and me, *Grease* hit the sweet spot.

For one thing, it was set in the 1950s. In the 1970s, we were *all about* the 1950s. Collectively obsessed. (Remember the *Happy Days* craze?)

And when we weren't pining for the '50s, we were getting our disco on . . . and *Grease* had the king of disco himself, John Travolta, fresh off *Saturday Night Fever*.

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Our parents hadn't let us see
that

movie; we'd absorbed it through osmosis and the ubiquitous, Top 40 stylings of the Bee Gees.

But

Grease?

This one, they let us see! And see. And see again. Like Sandy and Danny, we were hopelessly devoted . . . and I, for one, never really got over it.

So it is with great anticipation that my inner 14-year-old awaits the Beaufort Theatre Company's upcoming production of *Grease* at the USCB Center for the Arts. I can't wait to sing along – hopefully just in my head, but I make no promises. I plan to dance in my seat during “Summer Nights” and “Greased Lightnin” and cry like a baby when Rizzo belts “There Are Worse Things I Could Do.” My chills are multiplyin' just thinking about it.

Director Libby Ricardo says I'm right to be excited about this show.



“I personally find the play even more compelling than the movie,” she tells me, “primarily because it’s more reflexive about our nostalgia for that time period. In our production, we're playing quite a bit with the idea of fantasy versus reality. The show centers around teenagers in the Chicago suburbs in 1959. In many ways, the students of Rydell High look and behave like adults, and yet, they fantasize about love, romance, friendship, cars and fame. They're kids in a world that expects them to be adults.”

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Libby is new to Beaufort, and our theatre community is very lucky to have her here. She's been acting professionally since age 11, did her undergrad work at the NYU Tisch School of the Arts, trained at the Stella Adler studio, studied at the Bali Conservatory with Per Brahe and the Experimental Theatre Wing's International Theatre Workshop in Amsterdam, and got an MFA in Performance from the University of Georgia.

"That's where I met my husband George," she says. "He was working on his PhD at the time." George Pate is the new Assistant Professor of English in Drama and Theatre at USCB.

Libby is working with a multi-age cast – from teenagers to adults "of a certain age" – and she says it hasn't been an issue at all.

"When I see the cast on stage, I don't for a minute think about the age difference. They look like high school students to me. I think a majority of the credit goes to a cast that is having fun together – that, and our older cast members having hit the genetic jackpot. No one looks their age."

Heading up the ensemble are Elaine Lake and Karl Wells as Sandy and Danny.



"Elaine Lake is a fantastic singer and actress," says Libby Ricardo. "She is a staple in the

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community, and I understand why. Karl Wells is a great singer and completely adorable on stage; crush-worthy, even."

Crush-worthy Karl says he hasn't done any musical theatre since high school, when he performed in *Mame* and also did "some stellar improv in my guidance counselor and principal's office; Emmy worthy, really." He's still not quite sure how he landed the coveted role of Danny Zuko.

"Although I've got to be honest and say that the



'Danny' role was on my radar since the moment I heard about *Grease* coming to USCB, I'd actually elected not to audition due to some scheduling issues. Bonnie hunted me down, drugged me, and next thing I knew I was shooting my collar, singing

Summer Nights

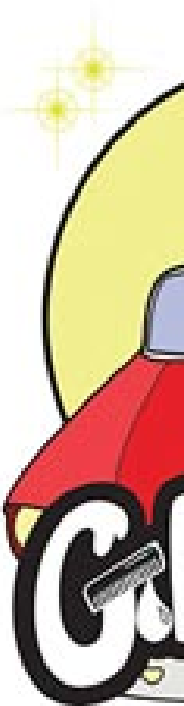
and she told me I had the role. I'm still not quite sure what happened." ('Bonnie' is Bonnie Hargrove, executive director of the USCB Center for the Arts; she worked with Karl last spring in the BTC production of "A Piece of My Heart" and knew what he could do.)

Elaine Lake is best known locally as one of the three singing Sweetgrass Angels. They perform regularly at restaurants, bars and entertainment venues throughout the Lowcountry and have a large and loyal following. She acknowledges that "Sandy" has long been a dream role of hers.

Elaine is also realizing another dream with this production: working on stage with her husband Jason again – he plays Vince Fontaine – after a lengthy hiatus. For a very long time, Beaufort theatre folk knew Elaine and Jason Lake as the crackerjack team who ran lights and sound from the back of the house. Then Elaine – who hadn't been on stage in almost two d

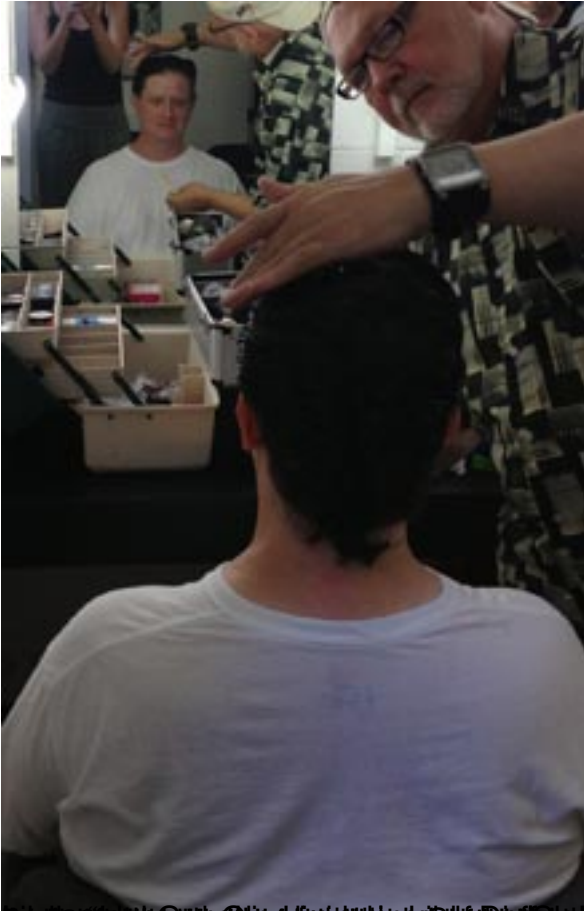
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