

It's 'Almost Baroque' — in time for Christmas

Actors promise to get a Handel on 'Scandal'

BY PATRICK WEBB

The show's title is "Almost Baroque for Christmas."

And director Susi Brown hopes audiences will be entertained as the holiday looms.

The latest show by Ten Fifteen Productions opened this week, and continues Thursday, Friday and Saturday night. Organizers promise every night will be different.

'Present'

The holiday review is the second production at the Ten Fifteen Theater since COVID-19 restrictions have eased. Brown's longtime collaborator Karen Bain directed the Irish play "The Weir" in October.

"It is always exciting to open the box again," said Brown when asked about emerging from pandemic-related shut-downs. "It is as if I am opening a great big present that's been shoved in the closet for a while."

Brown, a retired school drama teacher, has directed, acted and created costumes for countless shows in Astoria. Some years after The River Theater closed, she created Pier Pressure Productions, which, in part, led to the development of the Ten Fifteen Theater. Brown now serves as the theater's board secretary.

Seeing red

The Christmas show concept began in Brown's storage area.

"The whole impetus for this came from some costumes that we already owned," she said. Actors had worn red and white dresses in a production with a Marie Antoinette-Bastille Day theme.

"I thought we should use them again, because red and white are good holiday colors," Brown added.

Serendipitously, she located a bolt of unused red fabric which she sewed into vests for the male characters.

The baroque theme was chosen, in part, because it hadn't been a focus of many recent local theater selections.

Baroque generally refers to a period in European history straddling the 17th and 18th centuries when earlier austerity was replaced with grand architecture, paintings featuring intricate adornment and ornate musical styles led by Handel. On the



Patrick Webb

Music and poetry are key components of the acts presented by the performers in 'Almost Baroque.' Left to right are Patrick Lathrop, who will sing a piece from 'La Cage aux Folles' and perform a monologue, DanPa Reiley, who will play an original keyboard piece, guitarist Niall Carroll, who will sing 'Hallelujah,' and Jim Dott who will read poetry and perform in a scene from 'The Misanthrope.'

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- Susi Brown, director of 'Almost Baroque for Christmas.'

stage, Irish-born playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan and French satirist Molière thrived, ridiculing hypocrisy while incurring the wrath of the establishment.

All three figure in Brown's lineup.

Intrigue

DanPa Reiley is set to open, playing an original composition on keyboard.

William Ham, who appeared in "The Weir," will be emcee, and join a cast of six others for a scene from Sheridan's 1777 comedy of manners, "The School for Scandal." Performing alongside him will be Gigi Chadwick, Arnie Hummasti, Richard Bowman, Cami Lira, Toni Ihander and Liam Ham.

A review called a 2007 Seattle production "a finely tuned skewering of the leisure

class." A modern London reviewer wrote that the play is "composed of wit, intrigue, disguise, perfidy and romance in near-perfect proportions."

Another scene from the same work, a comic clash between spouses, will feature Slab Slabinski and Ann Branson.

"We are always arguing about one thing or another, but most of it is in regards to her spending habits," Slabinski explained. "She loves extravagances."

He will also sing "Ill Wind," a comic song by the 1960s' English performing duo Michael Flanders and Donald Swann set to the bubbly tune of Mozart's fourth horn concerto.

Branson is among local actors delighted to be emerging from shutdowns. She was in the Cannon Beach Coaster Theatre's cast of

If you go

'Almost Baroque for Christmas'

Ten Fifteen Theater

1015 Commercial St., Astoria

A holiday review directed by Susi Brown

7:30 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday

Tickets are \$15 and can be purchased at thetenfifteentheater.com

Attendees must wear masks and show proof of vaccination. Seating is limited to allow for some social distancing. There are no concessions.

"Play On," which had its dress rehearsal in early spring 2020 but never opened to audiences because of health safety concerns.

"It is nice to be back on stage as we ease back into it," she said. "It's great to see my theater friends again."

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