

Melodrama in Astoria

‘Shanghaied’ returns for a 38th year

BY M.J. CODY

He’s at it again, that dastardly Max Krooke. How dare he kidnap Eric away from his sweetheart Virginia? Boo and hiss, squeal and stomp. Audience members throw popcorn at the villain.

It’s all part of the raucous fun at the musical melodrama, “Shanghaied in Astoria,” now showing on three nights each week through September.

Now in its 38th season, “Shanghaied” is one of Astoria’s perennial summer events that visitors and locals alike look forward to. Talented local actors relish hamming it up and encouraging audience participation. Pre-show olio acts entertain with short vaudeville bits that vary between dancers, singers, musicians, magicians, jugglers and comedians. The drama then centers around Eric, who is “shanghaied,” or kidnapped, away from Astoria and his sweetheart, Virginia, and forced into labor on a ship.

The show, created in 1984 under the direction of former Clatsop Community College professor Del Corbett, melds Astoria’s early shipping history with humorous nods to its Scandinavian heritage. Astoria was a

bustling seaport in the late 19th century, notorious for its rough-and-tumble character.

Astoria was a town overflowing with immigrant workers, the majority of whom were men. Bars and houses of ill repute flourished, and unscrupulous ship captains, desperate for deckhands, employed the new enterprise of “shanghaing” unwitting males.

“I wouldn’t change the original concept,” Ashley Mundel said of the annual show’s direction. Mundel assumed the Astor Street Opry Company directing helm in 2018 after having acted in the production for 15 years.

“As much as I love to act, I really like the process of being in control of the whole show and keeping the product alive for the community,” she said. “I just love burlesque and vaudeville and melodrama.”

Audiences seem to love the cornball antics, sometimes raucous, exaggerated by the actors with flair and enthusiasm. Mundel started out as a makeup artist. Her love of dressing up is apparent, as the production costumes, created by Patricia Von

See Page 4

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Astor Street Opry Company, 129 W. Bond St, Astoria

7 p.m. on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays through Sept. 10, plus matinee performances on July 24, Aug. 21 and Sept. 4

Admission is \$15 to \$20. Tickets are available online, by phone or at the door

www.asocplay.com



From left, actors Miles Hand, Shaylyn Duffy and Elijah S. Wood walk through downtown Astoria in costumes.

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