

For July 29,2009

By Doc Heide

This week Lee Becker and I hiked in Peninsula State Park to start rewrites of “Guys & Does”, our upcoming AFT fall musical.

We’d been chomping at the bit to do this since the show’s most recent group reading on July 7. But this was literally our first free moment to do it.

As we sat on a Hemlock Trail bench, Lee said he feels like somebody who eats dinner knowing the next room is on fire. “I’ll get up and put it out eventually”, he said. “I just don’t have the time right now.”

Meeting on Meeting

That’s how the AFT summer goes. Last week we had Senior Staff meetings. Fall production meetings. Creative Kids Day. Multiple rehearsals for Northwoods Nightcap and understudies. And I submitted a Fulbright Scholarship application that took a minute or two.

This week there’s a board meeting. More rehearsals. A Noble Square gig. A reading of Matt and Zack Zembrowski’s work-in-progress, “The Strange and Bloody Tale of Horace and Fermalda Stump”, which could one day find it’s way to a stage near you. I’m critiquing two doctoral theses, preparing a Medical College of Wisconsin seminar, and writing this column.

And on our “day off”? Dave Alley had to be at Camp David at 10 AM Sunday preparing to record Chris Irwin’s concert that night. Chris himself was here last week doing gigs, flew to San Francisco Thursday night for a Friday meeting, then hopped on a plane to come back for Saturday rehearsal.

And Lee and I celebrated our day off from performing by performing with Chris on our day off.

Scary Schedules

The schedule books of Neen Rock, Jeff Herbst, and Kaye Christman are all heavier than the sound of Metallica. Colin Welford, our music director, keeps sending me 2:30 AM emails asking about revisions on the “Guys & Does” score (which, incidentally, he’s volunteering to transcribe in his “spare time” from working every night and pursuing a master’s degree at Columbia College).

We realize our work schedule pales in comparison to many of yours’. Raising kids makes Hercules’ feats look like a visit to the masseuse. But nobody in our current core company has young children. We are married to the theatre, and these shows sometimes seem like our unruly progeny.

I want to make clear that we find time for rest. Mental health demands it. I look forward to late-night DVD’s in our rustic barn like a 6-year-old craving an ice cream cone. And all of us love our visits to the Skyway Drive-In (where a little girl recently asked me, “Were you in that cheese play?”).

Of course, we wouldn’t want to do anything else. I remarked to our assistant manager Dave Maier, “We’ve got 12 people doing the work of 50.” He responded dryly, “That’s theatre.” And we love it.

See you under the stars.

AFT performs at the Peninsula State Park Theatre Monday-Saturday through August 29. The world premiere ***Cheeseheads, the Musical*** plays Monday at 8 pm, Wednesday at 6 pm, Thursday at 8 pm and Saturday at 8:30pm. ***Sunsets & S’mores***, a centennial celebration of Peninsula State Park, plays 8 pm on Tuesday and 6 pm on Saturday. ***Muskie Love*** returns on Wednesday at 8:30pm and Friday at 8 pm. Advanced and reserved tickets are available at www.folkloretheatre.com, at 854-6117, at the AFT office in the Green Gables Shops in North Ephraim, or at the box office at the theatre one hour prior to performance. A park sticker is not required in the theatre lot for the show.

Doc Heide is co-founder, playwright, and performer with American Folklore Theatre.