Student Showcase - 2014 Arts Workshop at Cabrillo College

By Edna McQuary

"We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we're curious and curiousity keeps leading us down new paths." This quote could well be applied to the newly-formed senior arts group, Next Stage Santa Cruz. Can you guess who said this? The answer is at the end of this article.

On June 25th, six days of intense training put on by Stagebridge, Cabrillo Extension, and Cabrillo Theater Department ended in an exciting performance Wednesday afternoon at Cabrillo's Visual Arts Performing Arts Center (VAPA) Center. A group of about thirty older people - mostly women and two brave men - enthusiastically sang and danced Broadway show tunes to a small audience of friends and family.

The group of seniors, along with a few youngsters, had just completed an intense 6-day, 6-hour a day performing arts workshop under the direction of Kathryn Adkins and Mindy Pedar and were showing off what they had learned. Exhibiting confidence in singing and ease of dance movements in 'Consider Yourself' (from 'Oliver') and 'Wouldn't it be Loverly?' (from 'My Fair Lady'), their joy transferred itself to the audience. Keifer Taylor, Cabrillo College performance major, also accompanied the troupe on the grand piano.

Veteran television anchor/producer Doree Steinman kept the camera rolling as she filmed the performance for her Community Television program, "The Second Fifty Years." It will be shown on 6PM on Thursday, July 10 and Saturday, July 12 and every Thursday and Saturday on the following four weeks, thru July. You may view it on Community TV - Comcast 27 and Charter 73.

The Cabrillo Collaborative group was started as a summer camp in 2012 under the auspices of Stagebridge Senior Theatre-Oakland, which at that time had 35+ years of experience and had 200 members/students. At Cabrillo, last year 50 local students signed up; this year there were 80. To avoid confusion with Stagebridge Oakland, the name was changed to Next Stage Productions. Soon they will be under the auspices of the Santa Cruz County Arts Council until they obtain non-profit 501(c) 3 status and can operate independently.

Senior arts advocate Lynn Knudson started the program in 2012 after obtaining a development grant from the Santa Cruz County Arts Council. With the help of Stuart Kandel, founder of Stagebridge Oakland (the organization which became their fiscal sponsor), Lynn and friends from the Santa Cruz Follies embarked on establishing a senior theater in Santa Cruz County.

To achieve this they have conducted educational training classes in acting, improvisation, musical theater, storytelling, and dance; created a touring performance troupe, "Hats Off," which played locally twenty times in 2013; provided sampling workshops at Cabrillo College; conducted a study field trip to Cabrillo Stage's "Lunch" which included the opening night reception and discussion with the writers after the show. In addition, they offered the first-ever Summer Performing Camp for ages 50+ through Cabrillo Extension, the culmination of which was the exciting program on June 25th.

They will be continuing classes in the fall at the Congregational Church of Soquel, 4661 Soquel Drive, Soquel, as well as other locations in the area. Please refer to their new website www.nextstagessantacruz.org.

Lynn says, "Our slogan is "Engage, educate and enrich" and our mission is to provide our aging community with affordable public access to the educational, health, and civic opportunities and benefits of participating in and enjoying the theater and performing arts. We serve the Santa Cruz and Monterey Bay community with emphasis on seniors age 50+, enriching the lives of those who take an active part in our programs. On either side of the footlights, those involved represent diversity of age, culture, life experience, and a strong appreciation of the importance of the arts and aging."

For further information and/or suggestions on classes you’d like to see developed, contact Lynn Knudson at lyn@nextstagessantacruz.org. You can also look at the Stagebridge website www.stagebridge.org/santa-cruz and the new website www.nextstagessantacruz.org. The quote was from Walt Disney.

Captions: Senior Students in the classroom and a picture of our Student Showcase.