



Special to the Chronicle

C. Barry Denham and Lenny Klatt rehearse for the musical, "The Last Stop (Before Looney Town)," opening Sept. 20 at the Valerie Theatre in downtown Inverness.

Peacock Players to strut onstage with 'Looney Town'

a Peacock Players Production

THE LAST STOP

(BEFORE LOONEY TOWN)

An Original Musical Comedy
from the gang that brought you
The Last Resort and
The Last Broadcast of the
Gary Grizzle Show

Written & Directed by:
Frank Julian
Musical Direction &
Orchestration by:
Joe Bryan

Sept. 20 & 21, 2024 7pm
Sept. 22, 2024 2pm
Sept. 27 & 28, 2024 7pm
Sept. 29, 2024 2pm

VALERIE
THEATRE
INVERNESS • FLORIDA

IN HISTORIC DOWNTOWN INVERNESS
207 Courthouse Square, Inverness, FL

NOTICE: Flashing lights will be used which may affect individuals who are sensitive to light.

TEEN+
PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED

Join cast's crazy universe at the Valerie Theatre

By **MARGO WILSON**
Chronicle Correspondent

Is it a dream, a creative vision, or a hallucination?

■ When the audience members leave the Valerie Theatre after viewing the new musical comedy, "The Last Stop (Before Looney Town)," opening Sept. 20, writer and director Frank Julian wouldn't mind if they asked, "What the h@! did I just see?" he said.

This is the third year Julian has written a musical comedy performed at the Valerie, and the third year Joe Bryan has served as musical director and orchestrator of the show. The Peacock Players is the production company staging the show, and the name honors the small Peacock Theater at The Farm near Brooksville, a musical venue that Julian has helped support.

In this musical, some of the characters and many of the actors from the previous shows find themselves at an experimental psychiatric asylum, the Gerhardt Institute. There, Julian plays Dr.

Gerhardt, and Gerhardt's Institute "puts the 'mental' in 'experimental,'" Julian said.

It seems that Julian's first two shows really were just the hallucinations of some of the Institute residents. This show focuses on five crazy people, as well as on a mad doctor and a nurse, according to Julian.

C. Barry Denham reprises his role as motel owner Harry Heimleek from Julian's first play, "The Last Resort." Lenny Klatt plays Gary Grizzle. Grizzle was the radio host of last year's "The Last Broadcast of the Gary Grizzle Show."

Also appearing are Peggy Williams as Mrs. Abigail Dumont. She appeared as different characters in Julian's previous shows. This time, she's one of the crazies and has the habit of finishing everyone's sentences.

DiAnne Klatt, who also is a veteran of Julian's musicals, plays a character who thinks she's a CIA assassin.

Harry Lewis plays a character who thinks he's God.

Michael McIlhenny is featured as Dr. Xanthanabado (Dr. X), and Tami Wingard plays Nurse Holly.

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LOONEY

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McIlhenny was in "The Last Resort" and Wingard was in Julian's past two shows.

T. Rex Young plays the orderly NotJay, while LauraJo Julian plays Mrs. Carmichel, who also has psychiatric issues. Both have appeared in past shows. Randy Gullett, also a Peacock Players veteran, plays The Clacker, who has a problem communicating with women.

Emery Williams plays an orderly and is backstage manager. He's participated in past Peacock Players and The Farm productions.

As the audience enters the theater, they learn they are attending an open house and orientation provided to all prospective patients of the Gerhardt Institute, Julian said.

There's a short orientation movie and then the resident patients put on a performance about a mad doctor trying to cure five patients, Julian explained.

The doctor tries to manipulate the patients' mental states by the LED light headsets the patients wear.

About seven songs are featured, including a big production number, "Come on Over to Our Universe," where the characters encourage the audience to also be crazy.

Julian said some of the songs are "kind of Broadwayish." But there's also Nurse Holly, singing "a nice little ballad" about her trials and tribulations, and Dr. X, singing a rather "honky tonk" song about DNA, according to Julian.

Mrs. Abigail Dumont performs "You Talk Too Slow," which is a "spooky song," Julian said.

Julian wrote his first musical for the 25-seat theater at The Farm. Since there's only one door into and out of the theater, he thought a motel setting would be ideal for his show. His friends encouraged him to seek out a larger space for that show, "The Last Resort."

The Valerie Theatre staff allowed him to use the theater and some of the shows sold out. Now he has an arrangement with the Valerie to produce a show a year there, he said.

This year, Julian has added an extra weekend of

performances.

The show runs Sept. 20-21 and Sept. 27-28 at 7 p.m. and Sept. 22 and Sept. 29 at 2 p.m.

"It's an escape from reality," Julian said. "It's great entertainment. We want to sweep them (the audience) away for an hour and one half."

The show is dedicated to Steve Zdawczynski, who had been in Julian's previous shows and was slated to be in this one, too. However, he was killed in a motorcycle accident on July 13 in North Carolina. Harry Lewis has stepped in to fill Zdawczynski's role, Julian said.

Tickets are \$20. They are available at valerietheatre.org or from Peacock Players' website on citrusacts.com. There you can read more about the founding of Peacock Players and about the actors. Tickets also are available at the theater's box office.

The Valerie Theatre is at 207 Courthouse Square, Inverness. The box office is open Tuesday through Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. For general information, call 352-341-7850.