

Review: 'On Golden Pond' in Kingston

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KINGSTON — If you're looking for an antidote to violence, sex and special effects in entertainment, consider the current Coach House Players Production of "On Golden Pond." In Friday night's opening presentation, the community theater group gave the sentimental and thoughtful play a good reading.

As in Ernest Thompson's movie version, which featured Henry and Jane Fonda, this play deals with the eventual coming together of a father and daughter following a too-long estrangement.

A rustic cabin next to one of Maine's countless lakes and ponds serves as the summer home of Norman and Ethel Thayer. It is here where Chelsea comes to visit with her dentist boyfriend and his son. Forty-two years old now, she complains to Mother about her father while he is out looking for strawberries.

Norman, a cantankerous old man, is played by Alex Zabik, who gives a credible portrayal of the retired professor who forgets things as easily as he spouts sarcasms. And while the dignified appearance of white hair and beard signifies composure, the sight of bears in the woods has his character scurrying home with an empty pail.

Feistiness does find its way back into Norman's countenance anyway as the "old coot" — as his wife calls him — harangues the dentist who would sleep with his daughter.

The dentist's son, Billy (Thomas Netter), gets mixed treatment. While early on, Norman anguishes over the disrespectful teenager, he eventually develops a warm relationship with the youngster as they forge a bond while fishing in nearby Golden Pond.

Snooty and haughty as Billy's entrance was at the outset, the septuagenarian is surprised and wide-eyed to hear about the young man's social life in California where boys and girls "suck face" on dates.

While Ethel Thayer, as played by Adele Calcavecchio, exhibits warmth and compassion for her husband, it takes awhile before daughter and Norman can remedy their stormy relationship, which began in her childhood. Furious early on, Nichole Lewllyn's character turns tender and affectionate on return from Europe with her new husband, Bill. As in Norman, the sight of bears strikes fear in the heart of Bill (John Thayer).

Postman Charlie Martin receives a jovial portrayal by Michael Harellick, and Tess Brewer as the operator shares a game of telephone tag with Norman as he "relearns" how to dial a number.

There is one aspect in performance that gets in the way of a theatergoer's focus and involvement, and that is the time lag between scenes. With that circumstance occurring on opening night, the Coach House Players have another weekend to tighten ship.

IF YOU GO ...

What: Ernest Thompson's "On Golden Pond"

Where: Coach House Players, 12 Augusta St., Kingston

When: 8 p.m. July 16-17, 2 p.m. July 18

Tickets: \$18, \$15 senior citizens and age 11 and younger

Call: 331-2476

On the Web: www.coachhouseplayers.org