

Minutes of the Meeting  
Camden Opera House Committee  
Wednesday September 17, 2014, 5:30 PM

Present: Marc Ratner, Chair; Kate Bates, Nora Hayes Eldredge, Kerry Hadley, Opera House Manager; Dave Morrison, Assistant Manager/Technical Director; Suzanne Lufkin Weiss, Rene Hutcheon, Volunteer.

Absent: Susan Dorr, Secretary; Don White, Select Board Liaison

Call to Order: M. Ratner 5:35 PM. Minutes of May 19<sup>th</sup> meeting were accepted.

Manager's Report:

-Kerry Hadley discussed summer highlights, events review and a look ahead. A summer intern created window displays, and an Opera House powerpoint, did historic research, researched and ordered 120<sup>th</sup> banners, etc. She pointed out that with every event produced in house, there are more staffing and sponsorship needs to be fulfilled. She will provide a list of previous sponsors at the next meeting to review future underwriting options. Of note, the summer season performances by Barnaby Bright, Iris Dement, Fred Garbo, The Mallet Brothers, and Neil Paul Stokey were all successful in their own right. The PBS documentary of Andre the Seal, entitled *The Seal Who Came Home*, was screened on August 6<sup>th</sup> to a standing room only crowd. A partnership with Maine Public Broadcasting Network, in association with the Public Broadcasting System and with support and help from members of the Goodridge family, allowed the Camden Opera House to provide this free community screening of the 50-minute film. It was a defining moment with regard to Opera House's role in our Midcoast community. Also on a film note, CIFF is coming up!

-New producer Will Neils is eager to bring many ideas to the table for future events, including packaging 2 or 3 local musician/talent together in a low cost/low key approach. He would like to bring back The Mallet Brothers in concert, as well as the possibility of bringing his extensive historic rock concert footage archive to the Opera House screen. A review of the demographics proves this may be a good fit. Marc Ratner mentioned a screening of The Beatles "Hard Day's Night" is another film that would indeed fit the bill.

- The Camden Conference, in partnership with the Maine Farmland Trust presented a free screening of Debra Koons Garcia's documentary "Symphony of the Soil" on Friday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>. Debra Koons Garcia, the film's director, writer and producer, was present and led a discussion after the film with sustainable agriculture visionary Fred Kirschenmann, and president and CEO of the Maine Farmland Trust John Piotti. There were sound and equipment issues which were discussed at length with Koons Garcia. Interestingly, CIFF successfully uses the Opera House projector and brings in HI Def when necessary. They have never had the same issues. The Opera House may have been provided with a poor quality version of the film.

-Kerry elaborated further on the film screening issues, and pointed out that a grant was applied for that would allow the Opera House a fully motorized screen and HI Definition Projector. Marc Ratner inquired as to whether we should also be looking to upgrade to a Digital System, as ultimately that is the way that all movie house/screening rooms are moving. After discussion with Dave Morrison, Assistant Manager/Technical Director, it was decided that this is a good "first step" to upgrade the Opera House's system.

- Suzanne requested Kerry provide the Mission Statement and Opera House Committee job descriptions as soon as possible, in order to better define the committee's purpose.

-Kerry and Suzanne will update us on Penobscot Bay Chamber of Commerce Business "After Hours" event this December, and as to if the Opera House of the Camden Snow Bowl will be hosting.

120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Report – Rene Hutcheon

-Publicity and press coverage honoring the Opera House's Anniversary in the PenBay Pilot, Camden Herald and Village Soup was fantastic. On Saturday July 9<sup>th</sup>, the Opera House Committee invited the public to share in a birthday celebration on the Village Green, complete with cake and music by *Alex and Shayna*. Several of Fred Garbo's inflatables were on display, promoting that evening's event and adding an out-of-this world celebratory ambience to the scene. Also on hand was a book for community members to record their favorite Opera House memories.

-Banners in honor of the 120<sup>th</sup> year have been hung on the Opera House edifice, and a window display put in place at the ground level.

-Other ideas for honoring the anniversary going forward were discussed, including but limited to, a display in the Picker Room, a Float in the Camden Christmas Parade, as well as the possibility of a screening of *Perils of Nyoka*, the 1942 movie which starred Camden resident and Opera House friend, Kay Aldridge, as "Nyoka the Jungle Girl". On display for our meeting was a poster from Nyoka and the Tigermen that the Opera House has received on "indefinite loan" from the history center at the library. It needs to be protected with glass or plexiglass prior to being displayed in a public space.

-In January, Barbara Dyer, Camden's "Official Historian", will be honored for her contributions to the Opera House's 120<sup>th</sup> historical recollections, and provided with a plaque and a lifetime a free seat in the auditorium.

-A discussion amongst the committee of how the Camden Opera House is on the National Register of Historic Places. What are other ways we can illustrate our Opera House's historic past? What were some other things going on in Camden and the US in 1894? Is there a way to celebrate this in a contemporary vs. historical fashion?

#### Rates Policy:

-Marc brought up that the Opera House's most recent renter, Everyman Repertory Theater ("Vanya, Sonia, Masha, & Mike" September 6,7,13,14,19,20,21) has a producer who questions Opera House rates. There needs to be an ongoing discussion with our renters and possibly the Town as to a clearly defining what is a private rental, an Opera House produced event, and a public event. The Opera House committee in concert with the Town of Camden must ensure the financial sustainability of the Opera House. In order to do this, we need to look at other models i.e. concessions. It was pointed out that The Strand Theater does this, but has a concrete floor, and an olfactory issue to go with this money generating option. We need to draw in younger audiences; let's find a way of positioning ourselves as such.

#### Additional notes:

-Logo and branding should be reviewed. Marc reminded Kerry of how much esteem he has for Aneeli Skaar and that he heard that she is doing a logo for the town?

- Committee members requested a Financial Statement be provided at each meeting.

- Kerry to provide a copy of Mission Statement to all members; -David to provide Technical Report to all members.

Old Business:-Grant for website; clarification that deadline is mid-November; Suzanne mentioned that grant organization is flexible and understanding if more time is needed.

Respectfully submitted,

Nora Hayes Eldredge

Oct 1, 2014