

home VOICES

‘Mrs. Claus in Menopause’

Terry and I made a trip to Wakefield last week to see dress rehearsal for a new one-woman musical comedy called “Mrs. Claus in Menopause.” It is playing at the True Brew Cafe on Robinson Street, just up from the main drag.

The play is the brainchild of Kathleen Dahill of Westerly. She wrote the music and lyrics, and the play is her original concept. She notes, however, that she shares credit with Patricia Souney.

I guess I am impressed with anyone who can play music, but someone who can actually write a song and the lyrics leaves me in awe. I guess I have always held a secret dream of writing lyrics, a la Bernie Taupin and Elton John. I can dream can't I?

The woman in this one-woman show is Shanna Wells of Johnston. She bills herself as a fourth generation performer who graduated with a B.A. in Communication Arts and Science/Theatre from Lyndon State College. She has performed at Theatre-by-the-Sea in Matunuck and has more than 20 years experience in regional theaters.

I am sure Dahill could not have picked a better performer to play the part of Mrs. Claus. Wells certainly has the vocal talent to carry the tunes. She says that she has sung with a band and it's kind of easy to see because she exudes confidence in the spotlight.

The dress rehearsal we sat in on was not run before a lot of people. There were several other women in attendance besides us. Jokes about

menopause and men drew quite a few laughs. I don't have a lot of experience around women my whole life and the jokes were not hard to get, nor the inferences too far over my head.

I was intent on listening closely to the dialogue and for the set up of the jokes because as a writer, I really appreciate a well-turned phrase or double entendre. I also listened intently to the lyrics and was captivated by their smoothness and rhythm. I wasn't sure what to expect, but I found the lyrics were not forced. And when the lyrics took a comedic turn it was well delivered.

Taking something really difficult, like writing a play, songs and lyrics, and making it look easy is the mark of talent.

Let me relate the story as it appears on the program:

“Behind every great man is a greater woman - and Santa Claus is no exception. Doris Claus struggles with her rebellious teenage daughter, a son who's trying to “find” himself, an aging mother-in-law, hormonal hot flashes and an impending elf strike. Chocolate

is her only comfort as she desperately consults self-help books, new-age modalities - anything to simplify the holiday frenzy and solve her dilemmas. Phones, “flashes,” and family demands threaten her sanity. Doris boldly transforms her life and emerges - triumphant.”

So for all the men out there, take your wife out to a play in a great intimate setting. The True Brew Café is a jewel.

You may get an elbow in the ribs once or twice during the play, but you will earn her gratitude and she may think you better understand her. I'm not saying that is possible, just that she will be grateful.

And for the women, if you can't drag your man out to see this play, call some of your girlfriends and make a night of it. As I like to kid Terry and her friends, they love to get together and repeat themselves. Now that is something we men will never understand. Nor will we ever get a handle on menopause.

The play is running Nov. 15, 20, 21, 29, and 30 at 7:30 p.m.; Nov. 17, 24, and 25 at 2 p.m.; Dec. 27 and 28 at 7:30 p.m., and Dec. 29 and 30 at 2 p.m.

Sharing in the credits for the production is Christopher Sweitzer who handles the sound, lighting and recording. He has been a theatrical lighting designer and audio engineer who has worked on more than 50 theatrical productions. Sweitzer is currently editing video for Ciao Italia!, a national food show on PBS.