

Bard in the Valley President's Report – 2015

By Diane Gendron, President
November 23, 2015

A successful sixth season

In 2015, Bard in the Valley (BIV) staged Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* at three outdoor venues in Greater Langley. The show was well received with 2,325 people attending the performances.

The play, directed by Mandy Dyck and produced by Diane Gendron with assistant producer Shawn McGrory, was fast-paced and fun – family entertainment at its best. The show featured a quirky, fantastical Spaniard, love-struck men, witty women, delightful costumes and a beautiful set. Thanks to the vision of the director, the talented actors, the hardworking and knowledgeable technicians, the enthusiastic, creative and supportive crew and production team and generous sponsors and supporters, this year's audiences were treated, once more, to another memorable Bard in the Valley production.

BIV was delighted to highlight the work of two young artists in this show. The play featured original, high-energy dances by choreographer and dance instructor, Kyra Esau, and two original songs written and performed by multi-talented Bard in the Valley cast member and musical director, Lauren Trotsuk.

The season opened on July 1 as part of Fort Langley's local Canada Day Celebrations. Two performances were added in Fort Langley in 2015 on July 2 and 3. Following the successful partnership with the Township 7 Winery in 2013 and 2014, BIV was invited back and staged five performances there on the middle two weekends in July. Then on the final two weekends in July, Bard in the Valley returned to its home stage in Langley City – the Spirit Square Stage at Douglas Park – for another eight performances.

BIV planned to stage 16 performances in 2015 – two more than in 2014. Sadly, despite the fact that the Lower Mainland had many sunny days throughout the 2015 spring and summer, one performance was cancelled because of rain and another was only attended by 24 people because of the threat of rain. This is the first year BIV has had to cancel a performance.

Bard in the Valley is able to continue to offer this exciting, summer theatre admission-free thanks to generous community support. Because of the free admission policy, whole families come bringing their blankets, chairs and picnics, and spread out on the lawn in front of the stage to watch the show. And people who don't want to travel into Vancouver to see a play, or can't afford to go to a play in the big city can, and do, come to see BIV's productions – many of them from the area immediately surrounding Douglas Park (an area that includes many social housing complexes).

BIV has a terrific group of 60 talented actors, creative artists and dedicated people on the crew and production team who volunteer their talent, time and energy for the season. For the first time, in 2015, BIV gave the production's director an honourarium.

Many audience members have told BIV cast and crew that attending a Bard in the Valley production has become a welcome summer tradition for their family.

The Bard in the Valley team wishes to thank our generous sponsors, supporters and advertisers: The City of Langley, The Township of Langley, The Langley Times, The Rotary Club of Langley, 24/7 Security, Tourism Langley, Coast Capital Savings, MediaLink Graphic Design, Deloitte, The Waterstone Law Group, The Township 7 Winery, MLA Rich Coleman, Jim See Trucking and the BC Community Gaming Grant.

Bard in the Valley board members attended City and Township Council Meetings in June, at which BIV president, Diane Gendron, made a short presentation to thank council members for their ongoing support and to invite them to the show.

Bard in the Valley is fortunate to have continuing support from the City of Langley. Langley City, through an in-kind grant, gives BIV the rehearsal and the performance spaces. In addition, they print the production posters – large and small, scripts for the auditions and programs for the performances. Plus they list the BIV production on their website and on the marquee at Douglas Park. It is a pleasure working with the enthusiastic and supportive City staff.

The attractive poster for Love's Labour's Lost was designed by graphic artist Ingo Holst.

Pearl Wong and her team of volunteers, once again, provided a theatre-style concession at all performances giving all profits to Bard in the Valley.

All sponsors were sent a thank you letter along with a program, and copies of the Langley Times advertisement, poster and handbills as well as two complimentary tickets to see the show at the Township 7 Winery. The Langley Advance ran a BIV-related ticket give-away contest and the winner was given two tickets to see the show at the Township 7 Winery. Council members at the Township and City of Langley, the BIV Founding 50, media, cast and board members were all given two tickets to see the show at the Township 7 Winery.

BIV received great coverage in the media for both the auditions and for the performances. For the performances: a full-page article with photo in the Langley Times; a ¾-page article and photo in the Langley Advance; photos and articles in the Cloverdale Reporter, Surrey Now Newspaper and Discovering Langley 2015; online and hardcopy listings in the Times, Advance, Langley Arts Council, Tourism Langley, Sun, Province, Georgia Strait, Playboard Magazine and the City of Langley website.

The BIV website is updated regularly by BIV board member Michael Brown. The set is stored at board member Jim See's home. Board member Leslie Gaudette coordinates the front of house team.

Bard in the Valley's Youth Theatre Program

The BIV Youth Theatre Camp is coordinated by Bev Pride who brings to the program her wealth of experience with youth theatre and community theatre, both on and off-stage. In 2015, BIV partnered with the Langley Players Drama Club to create a two-week summer theatre camp for 15 young people ranging in age from 9 to 15 years old. Seven of the campers presented as youth at risk in accordance to the Federal Government definition of 'youth at risk.'

The camp was held at the Langley Playhouse, giving the young participants a true and real theatre experience that included stage lights, sound, costumes, learning how to apply stage makeup, plus the excitement of waiting in a green room while the theatre auditorium filled up with patrons arriving to watch the young actors perform on stage.

The fee for registering for the 10-day camp was set at \$100 per participant. Parents were given receipts of payment in order to claim the cost when filing their income tax. The camp was funded by the Langley Players Drama Club, Bard in the Valley and a BC Community Gaming Grant.

Dayna Thomas was the camp leader and Dylan Coulter was the assistant leader. Both are Langley Players and Bard in the Valley members, and have extensive theatre experience and education.

Workshops delivered were: plot development, character development, team work, auditioning, improv theatre games, voice/body/presentation, costuming, make-up, set design, set decoration, lighting design, sound design, stage combat and team work in rehearsals.

The lessons culminated in a production titled ***The Worst Pirates in the World***. The play was written and directed by the camp leaders Dylan Coulter and Dayna Thomas. As part of the production, the leaders introduced sword fighting, singing, a rhythmic sound piece and a group dance number to end the 55-minute show.

The show, presented as an example of the campers' work, was outstanding. The positive feedback received from the participants and parents, during and after the camp, indicated this camp was a great success for all involved.

The 2016 Youth Theatre Camp is in the planning stages.

BIV's 2016 production

In 2016, Bard in the Valley is presenting Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*. The play will be directed by Darcy J. Knopp. Darcy has had major roles in three of BIV productions, and has directed two – *Comedy of Errors* and *Julius Caesar*. He is a graduate of the drama program at the University of the Fraser Valley.

The production team is already in place. Auditions are in March and rehearsals start at the beginning of April.

The 2016 season will open on June 29 on the lawn in front of the Historic Community Hall in Fort Langley. This performance will be followed by one on June 30 and another on July 1 during the Fort Langley Canada Day celebrations. The next performances will be at the Township 7 Winery on the weekends of July 8/9/10 and 15/16. The set will then be moved to Douglas Park for the eight performances on the Spirit Square stage on the weekends of July 21-24 and July 28 to 31.

Focus on the Future

- Improve audience seating at the Fort Langley venue
- Update BIV lighting equipment
- Improve signage at performance sites
- Develop Bard in the Valley logo and branding package

Bard in the Valley Board

Once again, it has been my pleasure to work with the talented, generous, creative, hard-working members of the Bard in the Valley board. They continue to make this venture an exciting and worthwhile reality.

Diane Gendron
President
Bard in the Valley