

## Gloria's Guy: a Keeper at Blackhorse

By Anne Ritchie

Gloria's Guy, the opening production of The Blackhorse Village Players season, is a wonderful comedy, that opens our hearts to the laughter and sweetness of life and gives us a glimpse into hurdles that must be overcome to get there.

On that roller coaster whirl between high school and middle age, author and director Joan Burrows creates a story well worth the ride.

Gloria's Guy, played sensitively by Mark Hayward, is none other than the man who stood her up at the high school prom, and his current hurdle is hosting a bevy of females from high school days reunited for a classmate's wedding at his family's inn. Travelling down memory lane and enroute to maturity, there appear detours and forks in the road, and actors interact so well as old friends that the success is found not only in the story, but the characters as portrayed by a talented cast.

Hayward has us questioning his actions from the very start. Behind an amiable and eager nature that at times resembles a bobble head, there lies a hurdle that tripped him up in the past, one which he hides very well until the closing scenes.

The curiosity is escalated by a charmingly romantic Jessie (Kay Valentine), a teacher whose role involves matchmaking and mothering, occupations that lay the foundation of the events to come. Valentine brings more than 30 years of talent to a role that leaves us loving Jesse. She clicks with each and every character, ushering in their future hopes and dreams. As her daughter Peggy, Susan Jalbert convinces us that talent could be hereditary, even in characters, for her expressiveness and camaraderie delights us in each scene.

High school rebel Eva the Diva (Jamie Defoe) provides a vibrant flash of colour to hilarious scenes. A lively narration of what happened in the hot tub leaves little to the imagination. Eva rises to the occasion when clearing adolescent hurdles, surpassing all expectations thanks to the talents of Jamie Defoe.

The radiant Angie Sapalovski introduces us to Leslie, the most widely travelled character whose role demands the most energy, and we are quick to find out why. Sapalovski brings a childish enthusiasm and delight to life that affects each and every character and brings out the best in all of them.

It is Guy's Gloria (Dorothy Schmauder), however, who turns the key on the secret that has puzzled the high school chums turned adult for years. In a touching performance, Gloria's questions and admissions unravel the knots in Guy's past, and to the audience's delight, opens new doors to the future.

With co-producers Vicki Drier and Denise Kennedy, aka Stage Manager, Burrows has taken a multi-talented cast and created a tapestry of experiences depicting life's journey from adolescence to midlife with stories that reflect reality so vividly the audience may glimpse themselves as one of the characters. Don't miss the journeys of Gloria's Guy, playing until Nov. 12 at The Blackhorse Village Players. Call the box office at 905-880-5002 for ticket information.