WSU Arts Gala an exuberant experience; Human Race stages On Golden Pond

The efforts of the committees and the devotion of WSU’s followers, such as Morris Furniture and Barnes and Noble, use their Gala donations to defray all expenses. The subscription price of attendance all flows to these incredible students. These scholarships provide crystalline clarity as we see, hear and revel in the training they receive at WSU.

Now, for the delights of the event. Watching the hand-carved dressed couples arrive is gift enough. Everyone is tartorially resplendent with beaming smiles as we scurry from venue to venue. Each year it is our goal to make a well-organized jaunt through the many spaces filled with talent and — yes — food.

Jennie Buckwalter, and the chairs of the arts departments and college administrators, make up the Internal Committee. They select every molecule of what creates the Gala. Nothing escapes their eyes and palates. Catered by a combination of Kohler Catering, Chartwells and my favorite ethnic restaurant, Amber Rose, the food abounds.

Since everyone knows that the talents of WSU students are great, I am going to reverse the descriptions. Each venue will be described by its food. The entertainment will be an adjacent to the cuisine.

Starting our culinary guide, we begin at the opening reception. To me, year after year and hopefully forever, it is a jumbo shrimp repeat. All the rest of the grouping table looked great but shrimp is my constant focus. The shrimp at the Sea Garden brought us the entertainment of student guides and several teams of mimes. They communicated wordlessly marvelously with their message — have a great time!

Mexican food is an art and these delicacies were surrounded by the student art exhibit in the Sea Gardens. All was very tasty! European cuisine, luscious kipples, Greek salad etc. brought us chamber music by a stream of pianists and violonists.

Italian food, pasta in several forms leading to delicious cappuccino, means only one thing. You are right — opera! Gershwin’s Porgy and Bess is not Italian but it is opera. Puccini was not far behind.

Downstairs, the Herbst Theatre, now reached by an elevator, dished up beef, turkey, peppers and tomatoes and fancy salads. To make it authentic American, a chorus of singers and dancers belted out the beloved songs and a bunch of Elvis for the good old USA.

Classic British Cuisine has a wide assortment of foods named after autumns in England. There was the Yorkshire, the Buckingham, scores, shepherd’s pie and something called sage. This repeat presented the Bard along with the Chef. Shakespeare’s Midsummer Night’s Dream was given a joyous reading equal to the food.

Truth makes me admit that I never got to Celia’s Bistro in the newly conceived huge above the

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Commens. There, the tricolor, red white and blue but French, held sway. Croque monsieur with Chois, Gannache with Chauf Froid and cari- ior and another genus of poultry was treated to Gordon Bleu.

Not only did I miss the delicacies but I missed the marvelous chansons and whatever the main singer is called. My consolation, there is always next year.

In the Festival Theatre, a capsule version of Dolly Parton’s Nine to Five was given triple exposure. We had seen the musical and were amazed, as always, at the energy, the choreography, the singing and the characters. The capsule was effective and spectacular. How the cast could do this three times in the space of three hours was awesome. But then, we are used to being amazed and awed.

Congratulations to all who attend the Gala. You now know the real definition of the word gala. To those who missed it, you have to be there next year to understand what “gala” is.

Congratulations to all who made this such a great experience and memory. Jennie Buckwalter managed to finish her year-long task in time to look ravishing at the party. Co-chairs Lois and Don Bigler were floating on clouds of joy.

We said goodbye to Krissin Sobolik, ending her five year tenure as Dean of Liberal Arts. We will miss her smiles and enthusiasm. We are proud to announce that her successor, Associate Dean Linda Caron, will be with us to continue with the same verve.

On Golden Pond by the Human Race was just that — golden! The play brought together an amazing cast directed by Mark Hamlin. The delivery of the dialogue, the timing, the body language all captivated the audience. It was easy to forget the film version with Henry and June. Fonda playing the father and daughter focal characters.

The play is a story of our humanity. It lets us appreciate, anew, the power of family, of nostalgia and love that emerges from insight and appreciation. The father and daughter were the real father and daughter team of Jennifer and Jonatop. They are often featured by the Human Race and are masterful actors. As the long-suffering and loving wife/mother, Dale Hodges, delivered a seamless performance. The critical part of the boy, soon to be stepson, was a triumph for Caleb Barlow, a Steen School for the Arts Student. As the Golden Pond maat and ex-suamour boyfriend of the daughter, hirsute Charlie Clark, a former WSU classmate of Jennifer, provided satirical humor. The boyfriend that became her husband was Cincinnati-based actor Ken Early. He maintained a spell of dignity as he jousted with the father.

Each actor created the very essence of the play and its message. Played on an amazing set, the result was pure theater magic.