**FORT SALEM WELCOMES**

***DRACULA’S GRANDMOTHER***

SALEM, NY – “That reminds me of a song we used to sing in Transylvania back in 1142,” reveals Dracula’s grandmother before launching into a tune that celebrates all the magical qualities unique to vampires. She appears for the first time in recorded history in her own show, *Dracula’s Grandmother: A Musical Fable,* with book, music, and lyrics by Jay Kerr, celebrating its World Premiere August 7 at Washington County’s Fort Salem Theater.

This fractured version of the iconic vampire tale was not what author Kerr, the Fort’s artistic director, had originally intended. “I was actually going to write the fifth or sixth musical version of *Dracula,* because there can never be enough *Dracula* musicals.” It was in researching the origins of Bram Stoker’s 1897 novel that Kerr discovered some facts that interested him even more than the prospect of writing a musical with a recognizable title that might draw audiences to his theater.

“Stoker worked at London’s Lyceum Theatre, as a general manager for actor/producer Henry Irving, the first British actor ever to be knighted,” says Kerr. “Irving was his model for the Dracula character. Irving’s leading lady, Ellen Terry, was the Meryl Streep of their day.” When Stoker decided to produce a play of *Dracula* before it was published, Terry was too old to be given a role. “Maybe he should have reconsidered. The play was such a disaster that it opened and closed in one day. No matter how ours is, we’re running for two weeks.”

In *Dracula’s Grandmother,* Kerr has intertwined the comedy of backstage backbiting and manipulations at the first rehearsal of that *Dracula* play with the horror of Stoker’s much more successful novel. “Right after I read Jay’s script, I was scared to go to sleep,” confessed Rosie Spring, an actress who toured in the national company of *42nd Street,* and has starred in two of the Fort’s Mainstage productions. Spring plays Bram Stoker’s actress wife Florence Balcombe, one-time fiancée of Oscar Wilde.

“This was an incestuous little group of high-powered writers and performers,” notes author Kerr. “Somewhat like our troupe here.” Kerr met Ms. Spring when consulting with Tango Fusion, a dance company founded by Diane Lachtrupp and her husband, Johnny Martinez, with whom he had worked at Adirondack Children’s Theatre. “Rosie was one of their dancers. Now, in *Dracula’s Grandmother,* Johnny is playing her husband, Bram Stoker.” Also in the cast is Sara Curtis, who was featured in last year’s *Can You Hear Me Now?* and Hubbard Hall’s *Spelling Bee,* and David Braucher, who directed young people in Fort Salem’s Summer Camp in 2012. Also cast are Jared Barton, who has appeared with Cap Rep, Chris Martens, Thomas Swimm, and, in the title role, Albany singer/actress Gail Garrison.

“We’ve got a great cast, a classic story, and some funny songs. When you leave, if you’ve listened closely, you’ll know more about vampires than you ever thought you would.”

*Dracula’s Grandmother* plays for two weekends, August 7-9 and August 15-16, with Friday and Saturday shows at 8 PM, and Sunday matinées at 2 PM. For more information, visit the Fort online (fortsalemtheater.com) or call the box office at (518) 854-9200.