

Change on tap for Music Mania

BY SANDRA BOLAN
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Music Mania is coming back — Broadway style.

After 52 instalments, it was decided last spring Music Mania needed to re-invent itself.

"The variety show has run its course. The community flavour has changed fundamentally," said Cap Cowan, co-chairperson of the Music Mania Going Forward committee and co-president of the Stouffville United Church's Couples Club.

Music Mania was started in 1959 by the Couples Club, whose members itched for a creative outlet. They staged a minstrel show in which white actors, dancers and singers wore stylized blackface makeup and performed stereotyped imitations of African Americans, which were common at the time.

Segments of humour and dance separated the solo and group musical numbers.

After a couple of years, that type of theatre was no longer socially acceptable, so the group re-invented itself.

Another re-invention was in order, this time it would be Broadway musicals because they are "safe" and a "proven format" with a broad actor and audience appeal.

"We really believe it's important to protect what we think is a community legacy and to redesign it to move forward," Mr.

Cowan said.

But staging musicals is not cheap. Which is where A Polka Dot Tie Affair, April 13 at the Stouffville Legion, 150 Mostar St., comes in.

Mr. Cowan wants to raise \$10,000 at the event. About half of the 192 tickets, are already sold. The evening will include live entertainment with cocktails, a three-course buffet dinner, dancing to a DJ, door prizes and a variety of draws. Prizes will also be handed out for polka dot finery. The colour theme is black/white/silver.

Along with changing the format, how actors obtain the major roles will move to an audition process. However, anyone can be a part of the chorus.

The change was made, according to Mr. Cowan, to raise the bar of talent on the stage.

"Making a change is tough," he said. The group hopes to stage its first production in April 2014 at the Stouffville United Church. The goal is for the show to run two or three nights in the hall, which has 300 seats.

"We're serious. Very serious," he said. Tickets are \$45 until April 1, then \$50 and can be purchased at Barthau Jewellers, Card's Appliances, Fame International, Hearty Artichoke, M&M Meat Shop, Pharmasave and Reid's Antiques.

For more information, call 905-642-2545.

Tournament celebrates 35th year

BY SANDRA BOLAN
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The Buttermakers are back.

The slo-pitch team will hold part of their tournament at the Memorial Park ball diamond July 1 during Strawberry Festival.

The annual festival was created around the slo-pitch tournament, which is celebrating its 35th anniversary this year. The event brought in around 60 teams and 1,000 people to the town over the weekend.

"It brings back memories of the tournament and how it really started," said Mayor Wayne Emmerson who founded, coached and played with the team which is named for the coach of the Bad News Bears — Morris Buttermaker.

"I think it's great for the town," he said of the tournament's return.

A number of years ago, the relationship between the festival's organizers and Buttermakers was severed.

For the past couple of festivals, ball tournaments were held in Bethesda Park, but it was not a collaborative effort with the festival, according to Shaen Armstrong, the Strawberry Festival's chairperson.

After years of fielding questions about the Buttermakers, Ms Armstrong reached out to them "to see if we could bring back what was a strong tradition in a way that was beneficial to both organizations".

Last year, the Buttermakers played in a

tournament with an alumni team and many of them also play in area leagues.

The tournament is expected to start earlier in the week at Bethesda Park and then move to Memorial Park over the weekend, according to Paul Sinclair, one of the tournament organizers.

As in the past, the Buttermakers plan to donate money they raise back to the Strawberry Festival.

"It's all about giving back to the community," Mr. Sinclair said.

For more information and/or to register, e-mail buttermakerstournament2013@yahoo.ca

Strawberry fest back June 28

For this year's edition of the Strawberry Festival, 'Why mess with a good thing' appears to be the theme as not many new events are currently on the agenda. This, despite a new logo and Chuckleberry costume.

Last year's inaugural Sunday jam will return.

One new thing festival organizers hope to provide is sports skills for soccer, hockey, golf, volleyball, softball, judo and cricket.

More than hot dogs and hamburgers will be available to eat as the Stouffville Multicultural Association will provide offerings from various cultures.

For more information, go to strawberryfestival.ca



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