Mark Twain musical will return to Tier in July

By Mike Latona Staff writer

ORSEHEADS – Chemung County residents are well aware that Elmira served as Mark Twain's summer home for 20 years. In fact, many of Twain's most famous works were penned here in the Southern Tier.

Yet Rick Pirozzolo points out that, until recent years, this fact wasn't given sufficient attention.

"All we had for a tourist attraction was his grave," acknowledged Pirozzolo.

That all changed beginning in 1987, when "Mark Twain: The Musical" made its debut.

This musical extravaganza - for which Pirozzolo serves as marketing director - has already become a much-anticipated summer tradition.

A 1,550-seat indoor arena located off Route 14 in Mark Twain State Park, four miles north of Route 17, serves as the center for this elaborate show which chronicles the famed American author's life. The facility also houses Elmira College hockey games during the winter months.

"Mark Twain: The Musical" is sponsored by the Mark Twain Arts Council, non-profit corporation. This year's shows run from July 5-Aug. 28. Matinees at 2 p.m. will be performed on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays; and evening shows at 7:30 p.m. will take place on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

The production re-creates lively scenes from several of Twain's novels. Another detailed subject is Twain's deep and loving relationship with his wife, Olivia Langdon, an Elmira native.

The ending, said Pirozzolo, is especially poignant. "Invariably, half the people have tears come down their eyes.



'Mark Twain: The Musical' will be performed July 5 to Aug. 28 at Mark Twain State Park.

It's a spectacular, extravagant show but also very intimate," Pirozzolo remarked.

The shows are presented against a backdrop featuring a full-scale replica of Twain's Quarry Farm home, as well as the study where many of his most famous characters such as Huckleberry Finn, Tom Sawyer and the Connecticut Yankee came to life.

The musical is embellished by several special events such as wine-tasting sessions, autograph signings, post-show cabarets and performances for the hearing-impaired.

Several Chemung County residents comprise the 50-member cast of actors, singers and dancers. Another highlight is the presence of a chorus line featuring 20 Russian performers from Moscow.

Needless to say, an eight-week performing schedule with eight shows per week can prove exhausting. However, said Pirozzolo, many cast members return each year.

FESTIVAL

6 pm til 11 pm

"When you have this in your blood,

you understand that commitment and you want that commitment," said Pirozzolo, a parishioner at Church of St. Mary Our Mother in Horseheads. ...

EDITORS' NOTE: Tickets are currently on sale for all performances of "Mark Twain: The Musical." Prices are \$25, \$20, \$16 and \$12. Children age 12 and under receive a 50-percent discount, and senior citizens age 60 and over receive a 5-percent discount, Group rates are also available. Call 1? 800/395-MARK.





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