

RIDGWAY/OURAY

As they like it: Ouray couple joins Shakespeare troupe

By Caitlin Switzer

As a young lawyer working in legal aid in Colorado Springs, Mike Hockersmith rarely had time to prepare before heading to court.

"I had to think on my feet," recalled Hockersmith, a longtime resident of Ouray

who now works with the Tisdell Law Firm. "I had to move quickly; there was no time to mess around."

That early training should prove helpful to Hockersmith this summer, when he and his wife, Nancy Ziglar, leave their day jobs behind to take part in a traveling

Shakespeare troupe.

The couple was inspired by a performance of the No Holds Bard Shakespeare Troupe in Ridgway Park last summer. The troupe is headed by longtime friends and former locals John and Kate Kissingford.

"Watching them perform in Ridgway last summer was so much fun," Hockersmith said. "The interaction with the audience, and the spontaneity of the performance, and the fact that even though it is Shakespeare, the improvisational and other comedic elements really worked for me — it seemed like a great thing to do. And we thought, if we are going to do this, we better do it this summer."

Hockersmith and Ziglar, who teaches music at the Ouray School, have acted in community theater performances with the Kissingfords in the past, he noted.

"I have no formal training as an actor," Hockersmith acknowledged. "I got started in the 1990's, but I have just had a great time. And when you realize you can function on stage without a script, having a script seems really easy — that kind of training can really keep the play moving."

No Holds Bard takes a different approach to Shakespeare's work, perform-

ing not with the benefit of endless rehearsals, but "on the fly," as the plays were performed in the days of the Bard himself. At that time, actors would perform a different play each day, learning only their cues and lines prior to the performance. The players would often perform 100 plays over the course of a year.

"I have never done Shakespeare before," Hockersmith said. "But even

in the troupe this year, No Holds Bard Company Manager Kate Kissingford said.

"We have a core group of eight actors," she explained. "Mike and Nancy and my husband and I have a history of doing theater together — we did repertory in Ridgway — and we love working together. This will be a far reaching decision for them, to work with a Front Range company, and we are just

'We have never experienced Shakespeare in a way that is as thrilling as this.'

— NO HOLDS BARD COMPANY MANAGER KATE KISSINGFORD

if I had, I would have to let go of it for this method of performing — No Holds Bard is kind of on the edge. In Shakespeare's day, the actors never had time to rehearse, and they often had no idea of what the play was about, or where to go."

Hockersmith has been reading author Patrick Tucker's "Secrets of Performing Shakespeare," as a form of preparation.

"It's a really great book," he noted. "He shows us that Shakespeare's word choice, use of capitalization, and spelling — all of his choices — are between the lines directions to the actors. What it does is bring a kind of energy, a kind of danger to the work. These were popular entertainments in Shakespeare's time; this is what people came out to see."

No stage is required; instead, the troupe performs in parks and public spaces, with minimal equipment.

This summer, the troupe will perform Hamlet, and Much Ado about Nothing, he said.

"I will have to have my lines pretty clear," Hockersmith said. "You are just showing up, with talented people — it is similar to improvisation, in that you are performing without a net."

Despite the challenges, Hockersmith looks forward to performing with No Holds Bard mostly because it will be as entertaining for the performers as for the audience.

"It's going to be fun," he said. "It is so accessible, not elusive. There may be some vocabulary that people don't recognize, but by the way the actors are gesturing or acting, they will get the idea."

"Shakespeare did not just slap you around with tragedy," he added. "It is the engrossing human comedy, the whole drama thing."

There will 10 players total

thrilled to have them."

The company plans to play in Ouray, and is hoping to get some dates in Montrose for this season as well, she said.

"The nice thing is that our company can perform anywhere," she said. "We prefer outside performances, but we can go inside. We can do a show in the round, which is very relaxed."

Expect the performances to be highly entertaining, she added.

"You will not just sit in your chair and be bored," Kissingford said. "We have never experienced Shakespeare in a way that is as thrilling as this."

Ziglar will not be acting herself, but will instead serve as musical director for the troupe.

"I see it as an opportunity to expand on what I already do, which is perform and teach music," said Ziglar, who holds a masters degree in music history and literature. "In this setting, I will be creating music for the ensemble, improvising at certain times and creating opportunities for them to sing, with the harpsichord and the guitar and even the cello, all of which are instruments that I play. And it is also an opportunity to play with good friends."

No Holds Bard performances are very alive, she said.

"You really have to experience it," she said. "Last year the troupe played a lot of performances on the Front Range, and they played in Crested Butte at the performing arts center. I hope we can get the word out, and maybe play the park in Telluride this year, maybe Montrose would like to have the troupe for an extended weekend."

"If people are interested, they can contact us through the web site."

No Holds Bard can be reached at www.noholdsbard.com.



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