

# BERKSHIRESWEEK & THE SHIRES OF VERMONT

[www.berkshiresweek.com](http://www.berkshiresweek.com)

THURSDAY, JULY 20, 2017

PHOTO PROVIDED  
BY CAPITOL STEPS

## Finding humor in today's politics

Capitol Steps returns to Cranwell .... Page 10

Theresa Rebeck thriller  
at Oldcastle .... Page 4

Tour the secret gardens  
of Naumkeag .... Page 12

Capitol  
Steps



**CAPITOL STEPS**

# 'Equal opportunity offenders'

**Capitol-izing on political satire:**

The Capitol Steps begins 10th year at Cranwell

By BENJAMIN CASSIDY  
bcassidy@berkshireagle.com

**LENOX** — “I see at least a million people here,” Mike Thornton told a room of less than 200 at the Cranwell Spa & Golf Resort’s Harvest Barn on a recent Thursday night. Thornton was referencing President Donald Trump’s comments about crowd size at his inauguration, wearing what has become familiar get-up for actors parodying the current leader of U.S. politics: a wig, suit and long red tie.

While Trump, a republican, was the victim of this particular sketch, Thornton and the rest of The Capitol Steps — a musical political satire group that has been

performing for more than 25 years around the country — targeted members on both sides of the political aisle as they mixed skits with some songs from their latest album, “Orange Is the New Barack.” Thornton, for example, also played former Democratic leaders Bill Clinton, Joe Biden and Al Gore on this particular evening.

“We try to be equal opportunity offenders,” Thornton, a Steps member since 1997, said in an interview after the show.

But with much of the content focusing on the current administration, the appetite for such comedy isn’t so bipartisan at the moment; liberals tend to dominate the group’s recent audiences,



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CAPITOL STEPS

**Capitol Steps is playing at the Harvest Barn at the Cranwell Spa & Golf Resort in Lenox now through Sept. 1.**

Thornton said, and they have expressed more gratitude for the jokes than in prior years.

“What’s changed the most is we have people coming up to us now and saying, ‘I needed this laughter so much. It

feels like therapy,’ ” Thornton said.

This summer is the group’s 10th at Cranwell. Since arriving June 30, the group has been on stage six nights per week, drawing about 135

**“What’s changed the most is we have people coming up to us now and saying, ‘I needed this laughter so much. It feels like therapy,’ ”**

MIKE THORNTON,  
*comedian*

**“IF YOU’RE LOOKING FOR BELLY LAUGHS, TAKING STEPS WILL DELIVER.”**  
—EVENING STANDARD

**JULY 20 – AUGUST 5**

**LOW PRICE PREVIEWS  
\$25 TICKETS  
JULY 20<sup>TH</sup> & 21<sup>ST</sup>**

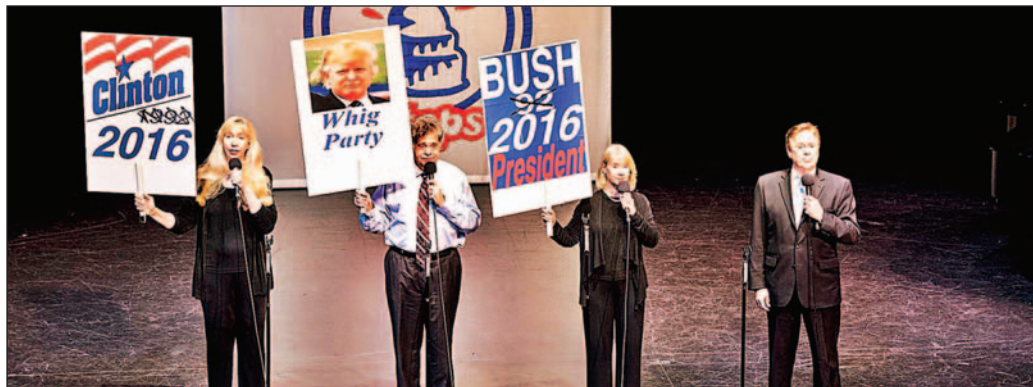
BY ALAN AYCKBOURN  
DIRECTED BY SAM BUNTROCK

**BARRINGTONSTAGECO.ORG • 413.236.8888**

people per show, according to Cranwell's director of sales and marketing Deanna Mangiardi. Before moving the performances into the Harvest Barn last year, Cranwell used to get about 50 people at the shows, Mangiardi said, though she added that presidential elections usually boost their numbers. The group's nobody-is-safe approach to political humor has made them impervious to the nation's polarization, according to Mangiardi.

"It doesn't matter if you're democratic or republican," she said of The Capitol Steps' strategy for picking its subject matter.

A rotating cast will spend time in Lenox this summer, performing new material regularly. On this night, Tracey Stephens, Corey Harris, Nancy Dolliver, Jack Rowles and Thornton devoted much of their time to lambasting Trump's administration, with pianist Marc Irwin leading them through numbers such as "I Want a Man with a Small Hand," "I'll Be Watching You" and "If There Were No Rich Men." In his opening skit,



In its 10th year at the Cranwell Spa & Golf Resort, Capitol Steps tackles the current political climate with humor.

Thornton addressed calls for Trump to reveal his ties between Trump and the Russian government. "Believe me, I have no intelligence," he responded.

When Rowles portrayed Attorney General Jeff Sessions, he too was asked about Russia. "La, la, la, la, la," Rowles repeated to a roaring audience.

Harris played former President Barack Obama, who received a big applause from the partisan crowd. He began talking about Trump's claims that immigrants are taking jobs away from Americans. "I

never believed this to be true until Michelle [Obama] lost her job to Melania [Trump]," he said.

Democratic politicians' jokes, however, weren't just shots at republicans. A subsequent track parodied democrats' dedication to their "bases," with actors playing Obama, Biden and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi singing to the tune of Meghan Trainor's "All About That Bass." They conclude the song by saying, "We all know how to save face with our base."

Dolliver had the distinct honor of playing U.S. educa-

tion secretary Betsy DeVos, who was roundly booed, and Sen. Elizabeth Warren, who received a warm reception. Her Warren character stressed the Massachusetts politician's professorial seriousness while reading from a book titled, "Angry Progressive Nursery Rhymes."

"You'd rather be named than ignored," Dolliver, a former television production manager who worked closely with politicians, said of the performances' victims in an interview. "They like to be in the show. And whenever they've been in the audience,

they've always been very gracious."

Stephens, who has worked full-time with The Capitol Steps for more than 12 years, played Hillary Clinton in some of the event's most popular skits and songs. The performance closed with its traditional spoonerisms, titled "Lirty Dies," and a rendition of the Canadian national anthem.

The Capitol Steps began in 1981 when staffers for Sen. Charles Dery of Illinois were tasked with providing entertainment for a Christmas party, according to the group's website. Since that time, other Capitol Hill staffers have participated, but the group is now largely professional performers.

Republicans Ernie and Jean Desrochers of Norwalk, Conn., thoroughly enjoyed the show. "It was hysterical," Jean Desrochers said.

"They poke fun at everyone," Ernie Desrochers added. He also thought the Trump depictions were spot-on. "If you can't make fun of politicians," he said, "you can't make fun of anybody."

## The July Third Thursday is dedicated to FOOD.

5pm-8pm Downtown Pittsfield • Rain or Shine

Sponsored by BERKSHIRE GAS

Pittsfield Shakespeare in the Park's *Twelfth Night* Opening Night at the Common 8 pm

### Performance schedule for July 20

Jacob's Pillow Dance Pop-Up Performance features *Eiko Otake: A Body in Pittsfield*, the newest installment of *Eiko's A Body in Places* series. The performance will begin at 5:30pm at 141 North Street and roam throughout 3rd Thursday.

**STREET STAGE**  
(corner of School and North Streets)  
• 5-8pm Rock On

**PARK SQUARE**  
• 6:30pm FREE Zumba with Berkshire Yoga Dance and Fitness

**PALACE PARK**  
• 5:00pm Berkshire Theatre Group's *The Music Man*  
• 5:30pm Pittsfield Shakespeare in the Park's *Twelfth Night*  
• 6:00pm Barrington Stage Company's *Bye Bye Birdie*  
• 6:30pm Pittsfield City Hoopla

**STREET PERFORMANCE**  
• 6:30pm Join Berkshire Salsa for a Bachata demo and a fun, FREE Salsa Dance Lesson on North Street in front of Crawford Square

**PERSIP PARK**  
• 5:00pm 8 Foot River  
• 6:15pm Moth Patrol  
• 7:00pm The Amy Ryan Band

**ST. JOSEPH'S STREET PERFORMANCE ON UPPER NORTH STREET**  
• 5-8pm Dance Party with DJ BFG

**OTHER HIGHLIGHTS:**  
• Big Elm Brewing Beer Garden next to Hot Harry's with a live performance and photo booth from Berkshire Museum's *Guitar: the Instrument that Rocked the World* exhibit  
• General Dynamics Mission Systems interactive engineering booth  
• Community Art Tent with Funky Phoenix  
• Live Radio Remote with Marjo and Slater on Live 95.9

**THIRD THURSDAY IS A SMOKE FREE EVENT**

Sponsored by the City of Pittsfield, Office of Cultural Development and the following sponsors:

**AUGUST 17 • TOUCH-A-TRUCK**  
**SEPTEMBER 21 • WALK-A-MILE**

DiscoverPittsfield.com

# Hubbard Hall OPERA

CENTER FOR THE ARTS AND EDUCATION  
www.hubbardhall.org | 518.677.2495 | 25 E. Main St. Cambridge NY

## L'elisir d'amore

(The Elixir of Love)  
Gaetano Donizetti  
Directed by Andrew Nienaber  
Conducted by Maria Sensi Sellner

### Join the Party!

A totally immersive experience.  
Hilarious. In your face. Fun.

Unlike any other opera experience, this romantic comedy puts you in the center of the action, with complementary food and drink.

**AUGUST: OPERA AT THE HALL**  
Music from Salem Listening Club, Sat. **July 29** @ 2pm  
Wed. **August 9** at 7pm (Final Dress Rehearsal/PWYW)

**Opening Night Friday, August 11 at 7pm**  
Sat. **August 12** at 7pm • Wed. **August 16** at 7pm  
Friday, **August 18** at 7pm • Sunday, **August 20** at 2pm

## Hubbard Hall Mainstage

\$60 Premium Seating with complementary charcuterie and wine \$45 Riser Seating, \$25 Students  
Dinner and Motel Premium Packages Available \$150 for individuals, \$250 for couples. Includes Premium seating, dinner at the Round House Bakery Cafe and a room at the newly renovated Motel Cambridge.