

FROM THE COVER

an inside look at northeast oregon's
arts and entertainment scene

'Much Ado About Nothing'

Shakespeare's comedy presented by the Hale-Turner Little Theatre in Elgin

By Lisa Britton
For EO Media Group

ELGIN — Grant Turner describes Shakespeare's plays as "the decathlon of acting."

"It requires the most tools that an actor has," Turner said. "Shakespeare requires you to be on at all times. I enjoy that — I love rehearsing."

Turner is the associate artistic director for Elgin Opera House and the Hale-Turner Little Theatre. This month he directs — and acts in — Shakespeare's "Much Ado About Nothing" at the Hale-Turner, a block from the Opera House.

Performances are at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 21, 22, 28 and 29. Afternoon matinees at 2:30 p.m. are Feb. 22, Feb. 29 and March 1.

Tickets are \$17 per person and available online at www.elginoperahouse.com and at the door.

At its heart, Turner said, this play is a comedy about life and love: "There's a gathering of friends and family, there's a party, and in the air is an upcoming marriage."

But there's also rumor, innuendo and mistaken identity.

"Sometimes it takes the least likely gang of rag-tag law enforcers to set things right again," Turner said. "But fear not — all will be well, and as the title suggests, it will be much ado about nothing."

Turner does recognize that Shakespeare can be intimidating, especially with such language as "thee" and "thou."

"Those throw people," he said.

Shakespeare's plays are not modern English and were written in a

verse structure.

"It's dense and poetic," Turner said, adding that it probably wasn't easy for all members of his original audiences to understand all of it.

"I think he's always been a challenge. It was dense and hard to understand back then," Turner said.

When the cast first comes together, he said they look at the playwright's work and ask, "What am I saying? Why am I saying it?" Shakespeare's work is, he said, an "intellectual argument at heart."

"The more you play the intellectual argument, the more the emotion comes out," he said.

Then they figure out how best to give that information to a 21st century audience.

"There's a lot of pre-work," he said.

This hard work combined with the time-proven verse and story bring the old language to life, and "by the time we get to the second

act, we are fully immersed in the Elizabethan world," Turner said.

To help out modern playgoers, each performance will begin with a 10-minute preamble to prepare you for the play you are about to see and explain the plot.

The Hale-Turner Little Theatre is a small space where the audience surrounds the stage on three sides.

"I feel it's closer to what Shakespeare had in mind," Turner said. "It allows you to look someone in the eye and deliver a speech."

And the actors have to be aware of all the eyes on the action.

"Every audience member has to see somebody's face at all times," Turner said.

The cast includes "a nice eclectic mix" of familiar faces and actors new to the Elgin scene, he said.

The comedy features Michael Cooper as Leonato, host of the party and owner of the house where the play is set. Avalon Blood-

good plays his young daughter, Hero (Anna Buckley as her friend and handmaiden, Ursula); Russ Buckley is his brother, Anthony; and, a newcomer to the Opera House, Amanda Berry is his feisty niece, Beatrice.

Joining them on stage will be Cody Wyld Flower as Pedro, Prince of Aragon; Zaquarie Mendenhall as his trusted aide, Claudio; and Turner as their cynical sidekick, Benedick.

Cassandra Johnson is the malcontented sister of Pedro and she, alongside McKayla Nitz as the trouble-stirring Borachio, put the action in motion to interrupt the nuptials of Hero and Claudio.

Jason Lineback plays the town constable and resident buffoon, Dogberry; Megan Duffy is his better organized deputy Verges; Andrew Buckley plays the volunteer neighborhood watch; and B.J. Brown is the friar who presides over the wedding.

Coming soon to the Elgin Opera House

The Elgin Opera House will present the musical "Matilda" April 17-18, April 24-25, May 1-2 and May 9-10.

Friday shows will be at 7:30 p.m. On Saturday, the actors take the stage twice — at 12:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. The performance on May 10 will be at 2:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$17 for the orchestra level and lower balcony. The upper balcony tickets are \$8. These are available now online at www.elginoperahouse.com.

Gift certificates and season tickets are available by calling the box office at 541-663-6324.

Updates and photos of current productions are also posted on the theater's Facebook page.

To learn more about the nonprofit Friends of the Elgin Opera House, visit www.elginoperahouse.com/giving.

Freeze the precious moments...
PRESERVE YOUR WEDDING GOWN.

- Your wedding gown will become your family heirloom. Keep it for the next generation of daughters.
- Wedding gowns kept in plastic bags are exposed to chemicals in the long run that effect the gown's fibers and color.

C & H Cleaning Industries and Dry Cleaning
208 Chestnut, La Grande • 541 963-9210

Open Tues-Thurs 11am-4:30pm
Fri 11am-5:30pm, Sat 11am-2pm



BUY ART


CROSSROADS CARNEGIE ART CENTER
Art for Everyone

2020 Auburn Avenue
Baker City, OR 97814
541.523.5369
info@crossroads-arts.org
www.crossroads-arts.org



GO WEEKEND OUTLOOK

FRIDAY
High 38 Low 28
Cloudy



SATURDAY
High 38 Low 28
Becoming windier



SUNDAY
High 40 Low 32
Snow possible

