

Each theater nestles into its own niche of production specialties.

THEATRICAL OPPORTUNITIES

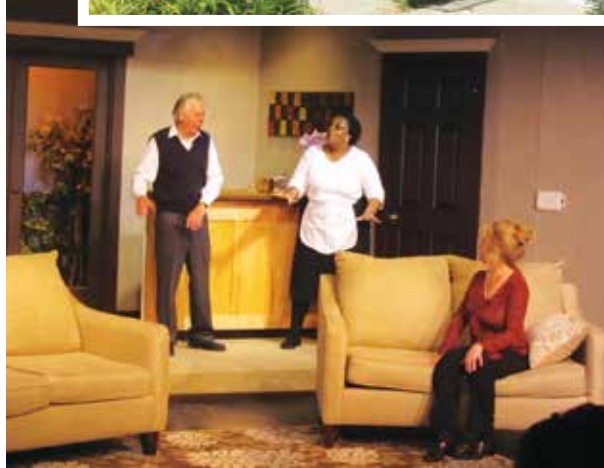
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musicals; **Clarion Theater** in family-friendly, faith-based musical theater; **One Eleven Theatre** in shows for children. **Barnstormers**, founded in 1952 and the longest continuously running community theater in Oregon, accepts auditions from anyone interested, as do Rogue Music Theatre and Medford's new **Collaborative Theatre Project**. **Brava! Opera Theater** produces full-scale operas and focuses on training "the complete singer/actor." The **Oregon Center for the Arts** at Southern Oregon University uses only student actors and crew. **Camelot Theatre** in Talent seats 164, while Medford's 1,000-seat **Holly Theatre**, which closed in 1986, will be the largest indoor venue between Eugene and Redding when it reopens next year. Other choices for theater in the area include **Randall Theatre**, which produces plays in both Medford and Jacksonville; **Oregon Cabaret Theatre**, which opened the same year the Holly Theatre closed; **Ashland Contemporary Theatre**, now in its tenth season, whose motto is "Come play with us!" and **Madrone Theatre Company**, a small group of actors presenting unique, intimate drama in Jacksonville.

The theater buildings are as diverse as the productions. Signpost Theatre, without a building, turns non-theater spaces throughout the area into temporary black-box style theaters. The Craterian and Holly are historic theaters, built in 1924 and 1930, respectively; the Craterian for vaudeville and the Holly as a movie palace, the first theater in the region designed for talkies. The Oregon Cabaret Theatre is housed in Ashland's "old pink church," built in 1911 and renovated as a theater in 1986. Barnstormers also bought an old church, the 1923 First Church of Christ in Grants Pass, and turned it into a theater in 1961.

Each theater nestles into its own niche of production specialties. Oregon Cabaret, for instance, aims to "produce topnotch theater in an elegant nightclub-like atmosphere," says artistic director Valerie Rachele. Ashland Contemporary Theatre is the only regional company outside of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival to focus on productions and dramatic readings of plays by Rogue Valley playwrights. "We're all about local talent and thought-provoking writing that stirs the imagination," they tell us.

Madrone Theatre Company does dramatic readings, accompanied by music, of such classics as *Spoon River Anthology* and *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, which they call "a timeless holiday classic filled with laughter, nostalgia, and heart." David Gordon, a former singer with the San Francisco Opera, adds musical enhancement (guitar and voice) to the performances.



Barnstormers Theater (top photo) and a scene from *Self Help* by Norm Foster (bottom photo).

The Holly Theatre is primarily a concert venue, suitable for big-scale Broadway-style musicals. Barnstormers' niche is its dedication to community tastes, producing mostly comedies, a Christmas play, musicals, and maybe "something edgy," says Wayd Drake, theater manager.

The Craterian Theater, in the Collier Center for the Performing Arts, presents everything from dance to comedy, Broadway to rock 'n' roll, symphony to Shakespeare, and has three in-house production companies: the Teen Musical Theater of Oregon, Next Stage Repertory Company, and Craterian Music Hall. "The purpose of these companies is to focus on developing and showcasing local artists of all ages, while building on our commitment to make the arts accessible to all through affordable ticket pricing," explains Aspen Droesch, development manager.

Signpost Theatre neither holds open auditions nor brings in professionals. "We select a play, then offer roles to actors from the community who are right for the part [and] who want to dig deeply into the script and live the role," Eugene says.

Rogue Music Theatre fulfills a niche for lovers of musicals who, like board president, Mollie Means, feel that, "for a while, if you are watching a live musical show, you can take a mental and emotional vacation from life." Clarion Theatre's musicals are specifically intended to promote the Judeo-Christian ethic and world view.

Brava! Opera Theater is the only company in the area producing a full-scale opera annually. The 2018 show will be *Abduction from the Seraglio*, by Mozart.

Randall Theatre is unique in having a "pay what you want" ticket price at both venues, fulfilling its desire to make live theater affordable for all.

Camelot Theatre, founded as Actors' Theatre in 1982 and housed in the state-of-the-art James Morrison Collier Theatre

Theater information and upcoming presentations

Ashland Contemporary Theatre • 541-646-2871 • ashlandcontemporarytheatre.org.

Barnstormers, 112 NE Evelyn Street, Grants Pass • 541-479-3557 • barnstormersgp.com. Playing *A Christmas Carol*, weekends, December 1 - 17.

Brava! Opera Theater, 2924 Siskiyou Boulevard, Suite 204, Medford • 541-261-5776 • bravaopera.com.

Camelot Theatre, 101 Talent Avenue, Talent • 541-535-5250 • camelottheatre.org. Playing *Mary Poppins*, November 29 - December 31.

Clarion Theatre Company, 1051 NE 6th Street, No. 5000, Grants Pass • 541-761-1733 • clariontheatre.wixsite.com.

Collaborative Theatre Project, 555 Medford Center, Medford • 541-779-1055 • ctporegon.org. Playing *The Snow Queen*, November 25 - December 31.

Craterian Theater, Collier Center for the Performing Arts, 23 South Central Avenue, Medford • 541-779-3000 • craterian.org. Playing Holiday Concert, Rogue Valley Symphony, December 1; *Gloria!*, Rogue Valley Chorale, December 2 - 3; *Seussical*, Teen Musical Theater of Oregon, December 8; Youth Symphony alumni concert, December 20; *A Celtic Christmas*, Tomáseen Foley, December 23; *Storm Large's Holiday Ordeal*, December 30; *Broadway's Guide to a Happy New Year*, mcubed, January 5 - 6.

Holly Theatre, 226 West 6th Street, Medford • 541-772-3797 • hollytheatre.org.

Madrone Theatre Company, 206 N 5th Street (New City Hall), Jacksonville • facebook.com/madronetheatre. Playing *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, December 8 - 10.

One Eleven Theatre Company, 205 SW 5th Street, Grants Pass • 541-450-9778 • oneeleventheatrecompany.com.

Oregon Cabaret Theatre, 241 Hargadine Street, Ashland • 541-488-2902 • theoregoncabaret.com. Playing *She Loves Me*, music by Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick, book by Joe Masteroff, November 16 - December 31.

Oregon Center for the Arts, Southern Oregon University, 1250 Siskiyou Boulevard, Ashland • 541-552-6101 • oca.sou.edu.

Randall Theatre, 520 N 5th Street, Jacksonville • 10 East 3rd Street, Medford • 541-632-3258 • randalltheatre.com. Playing, in Medford, *With Every Christmas Card I Write*, December 14 - 17. Playing, in Jacksonville, *Little Women, the Musical*, December 8 - 31.

Rogue Music Theatre, 830 NE 8th Street, Grants Pass • 541-659-0602 • roguemusicaltheatre.org.

Signpost Theatre Project • 541-761-1261 • signposttheatre.com.

Opportunities to see *The Nutcracker*

Miss Diana's School of Ballet. Performances at Sjolund Auditorium, North Medford High School, 1900 Keene Way, Medford. December 16 and 17. 541-941-7007 • missdianas.com.

Stillpoint Dance Studio. Performances at Grants Pass Performing Arts Center, Grants Pass High School, 8th and Olive Street, Grants Pass. December 9, 10, 16, 17. 541-476-4641 • stillpointballet.com.

Studio Roxander Academy of Ballet. Performances at Crater Performing Arts Center, Crater High School, 655 N 3rd Street, Central Point. December 9, 10, 15, 16, 17. 541-773-7272 • studioroxander.com.

(Medford Civic Ballet's performances were in November.)

Building in Talent, is a "semiprofessional community theater" and one of the largest community theaters in the valley. It offers a Spotlight Series, defined by artistic director, Roy Rains, as "small concerts highlighting various musical artists as well as touching on their biographies with narration and video."

Besides using local talent, Oregon Cabaret brings in professional actors from all over the country. "Its intimate setting and fine dining options allow audiences to have a unique night out on the town," says Valerie Rachele, artistic director.

"Clearly there is a love of theater in the Rogue Valley," says Aspen Droesch. "Community members are passionate about the arts and have their own vision and sense of purpose."

Valerie Rachele points to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival as an influence: "We are theater savvy here, in part due to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and its deep theatrical roots in southern Oregon."

Wayd Drake, however, just attributes the large number of theater companies in the Rogue Valley to theater itself: "The magic of theater is super appealing to people. Theater is such an amazing art form—the study of humanity itself."

That magic is never more apparent than in Christmas shows. If you are looking for holiday entertainment, take a look at what some of these theaters are offering (see sidebar). Good theater is only a few miles down the road from the Applegate, in any direction.

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