

Act Locally

Three play readings at Willamette Rep

Kirk Boyd doesn't take a lot of time off. Even when he heads to the coast and holes up in a cabin for a few days, the Willamette Repertory Theatre's artistic director brings along the one-acts that hopeful playwrights send him so he can sort the wheat from the chaff and make his picks for the annual season-ending *Readings in Rep*. Last year, he stumbled across one by a man named Matt Ginsberg. "I couldn't put it down!" he says. "It's a classic thriller: kidnapping, extortion, ransom, cops, parents, teachers, the whole mix. It's really cool!"

That play, by a scientist turned business owner who moved from Silicon Valley to Eugene, is the second of three in the series that runs for only one weekend, in a small space, with a supremely reasonable ticket price. "We started [*Readings in Rep*] for a few reasons," Boyd says. "It was an educational opportunity, and partially it was for the organization to hear plays we might be interested in."

And finally, though Eugene has a fairly high per-capita theatrical production schedule, Boyd says "There's a lot happening in the theater world that the Eugene community doesn't seem to know about."

This year, however, the Eugene community could hardly help knowing about this part of the theater world; all three of

the playwrights come from the Eugene area. Friday night's play, which has been produced before, is Greg Foote's *SWM*. After Foote reworked the original script, Boyd decided that he wanted to direct the reading. He calls it "a funny, modern play."

Saturday night's play is Ginsberg's *Old Friends*, which he had originally written in 1990 and, at Boyd's urging, updated for the Willamette Rep series. "I have no idea how audiences will react to it because it's more a movie script than a play script," Boyd says. Ginsberg has a fascinating background for a playwright: He's a mathematician, a man who received a doctorate from Oxford when he was 24 and who has been a faculty member at Oxford, Stanford and at the UO, where he remains part of the Computational Intelligence Research Facility even as he runs his own software company, On Time Systems Inc. In his free time, Ginsberg "modernized the language and date references and did a little rewrite," Boyd says. Chris Pinto, just coming off of directing LCC's *Hot'L Baltimore*, directs this reading.

Sunday afternoon's matinee reading comes from Dorothy Velasco, theater critic for *The Register-Guard* and a Springfield playwright. "I called Dorothy and asked if she had a new one," Boyd says, when it was obvious that local playwrights would be the theme. Velasco is working with

mention the pigs. "They're the conscience of the play; they're kind of omnipresent," Boyd says. Hans Christofferson directs the reading of *Pigs in Love*.

Besides the more casual nature of the readings, the space is different: *Readings in Rep* operates in the Hult's The Studio



Actors Cabaret of Eugene on developing her *Pigs in Love*, but liked the idea of a reading at the Willamette Rep. "It's very charming," Boyd says. The plot revolves around three generations of women living on a small southeast Oregon farm and the man who shows up on the farm. Not to

(formerly Studio One) and, Boyd emphasizes, "We keep the bar open so people who want to have a glass of wine while they're listening can."

Readings in Rep run at 8 pm Friday, May 18 (*SWM*) and Saturday, May 19 (*Old Friends*) and at 2 pm Sunday, May 20 (*Pigs in Love*). Call 682-5000 for \$10 tix.

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