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University Theatre Presents

BREAKING THE CODE



FREE for UO Students (w/valid ID) **O** UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

A play about Alan Turing: who he was, what happened to him and why

5.30, 5.31, 6.1, 6.6, 6.7, 6.8, 20:00, 6.9, 14:00

by Hugh Whitmore Based on the book *Alan Turing, The Enigma* by Andrew Hodges

Joseph Gilg directs: Hope Theatre, University of Oregon

Tickets: 541.346.4363 online: tickets.uoregon.edu/theatre



THEATER BY ANNA GRACE

UNDERSTANDING AN ENIGMA

The University Theatre explores mathematics and sexuality in Breaking the Code

Pieces of a life burst across the stage; the years slip by, 1952, 1939, 1949. The audience picks up the threads of the story, each scene inspiring the viewer to piece the events together, to crack the code to understanding the life of Alan Turing.

Hugh Whitmore's play, based on the book *Alan Turing: The Enigma* by Andrew Hodges, is a loving homage to a great thinker. Turing, working in England in the first half of the 20th century, was a homosexual who no more accepted that his sexuality was wrong than any of his more notable eccentricities. He is not a fighter, simply a man who wants to go about his business of applying mathematics for the greater good of society while loving men without being hassled. Tried, convicted and sentenced to time and estrogen therapy, Turing is turned from war hero to social pariah.

The other story of Alan Turing, the genius who broke the Nazi Enigma code and pioneered early computers, was given less drama but plenty of explanation in Whitmore's play. Whitmore is telling two enormous stories at once, and if the professional life of Turing wasn't given its fair share, at 2 hours and 45 minutes, it wouldn't have been wise for him to put much more in.

Joseph Gilg directs, surrounding his focused cast with a masterful set. His work with actor Jason Rowe as Turing is impressive. Rowe captures the nervous tics, slight stutter, self-sufficiency and hope of an incredible thinker.

Rowe's work as Turing, and indeed the role itself, are superior to much that has been done in Eugene. The cost of such a remarkable performance is that the other actors, whose roles were not nearly as well written, are somewhat overshadowed by his performance. Whitmore simply didn't supply them with characters that rival Turing. Yet the minor characters manage to be often funny and wholeheartedly invested, giving us a glimpse of what Whitmore could have written.

As is so often the case, I am grateful to the UO for choosing a complicated, relevant piece. While I don't love every choice the playwright made, this story educates and inspires. In the current social debate about gay marriage, *Breaking the Code* offers a clear warning of criminalizing human sexuality. Ultimately, *Code* leaves us with a deep sadness, reflecting on the life of a man whose thoughts and actions were decades ahead of his time. ■

Breaking the Code runs through June 9 at the University of Oregon's Hope Theatre; \$12-\$14. Tickets available at tickets.uoregon.edu.



JASON ROWE AND KARSTEN TOPELMANN
IN *BREAKING THE CODE*

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