

VLT
88th SEASON!

The Very Little Theatre
presents in STAGE LEFT:

The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge



The Trial of the Century!
Written by Mark Brown
Directed by Sarah Etherton

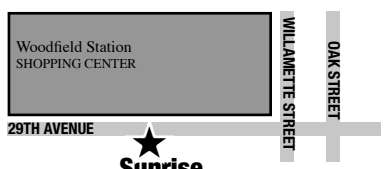
Dec. 2-4, 8-11
7:30 pm curtain; 2 pm Sundays
Tix: \$12 General Admission
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Wed.-Sat., 2350 Hilyard St.
Tix on-line at TheVLT.com

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Sunrise
Asian Food Market

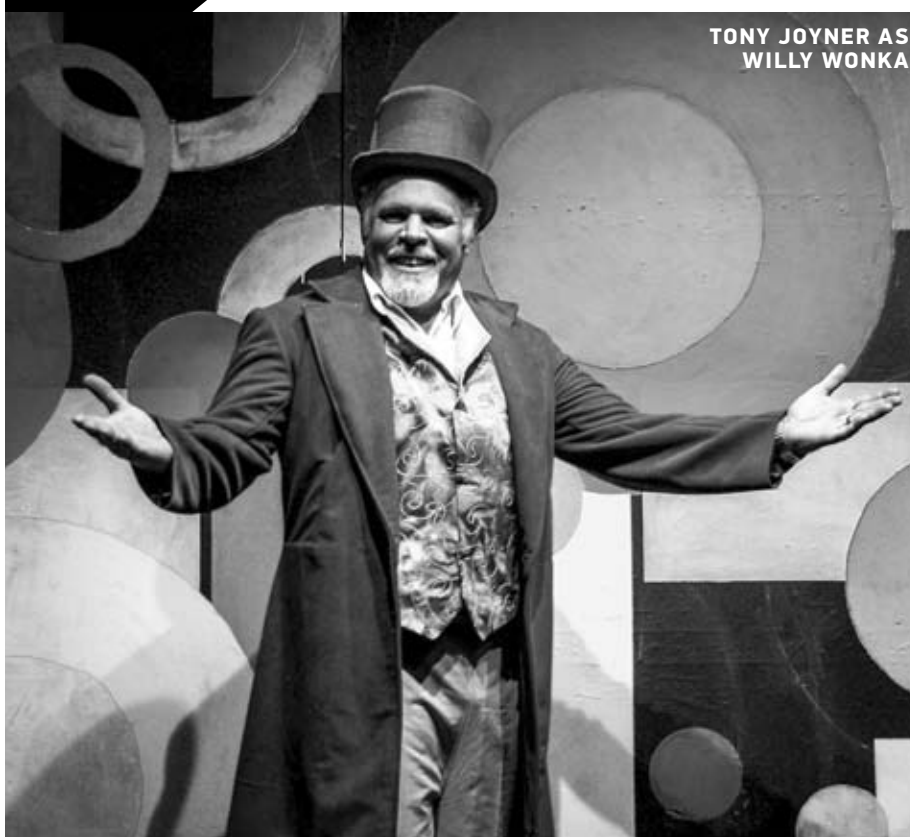
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THEATER BY RICK LEVIN



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WILLY WONKA

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**RESISTANCE
IS NOT
FUTILE**

Eugene Weekly

DOWN WITH AUGUSTUS GLOOP

ACE's excellent production of Roald Dahl's Willy Wonka offers a cautionary tale for these sad times

I try to get away, but it keeps pulling me back in: Trump. It's infected everything, this national nightmare. As I flail and floggle about for answers and curatives, it seems that simply everything becomes an abysmally significant metaphor — a parable for incipient fascism, rampant bigotry and the ugly chancre now broiling at the core of the human spirit.

Just a wee little bit of escapism is understandable in these harshest of times, if not mandatory, and I figured, walking into Actors Cabaret of Eugene's (ACE) delicious production of *Roald Dahl's Willy Wonka*, that I was in for a couple hours of amnesiac niceness. I wanted to get away.

But no — there it was, a story about a clump of bratty, selfish, greedy kids whose lack of common decency sends them up the chocolate pipe or down the trash chute. Turns them into big blueberries. Shrinks them into little turds.

Donald Trump is Augustus Gloop on steroids, and we handed him the golden ticket to the chocolate factory. God help us.

Stay with me, though, because I refuse to fall into despair, and I do believe ACE's production, along with being rather wondrous, is mighty timely, even serendipitous. Adults are advised to behold this story with new eyes, and take the kids. Everyone.

Here's why: The story of a poor, good-hearted kid named Charlie (Samuel Rose) and his Grandpa Joe (Tom Grimsley) winning an invite to the magical candy factory of Willy Wonka (Tony Joyner) along with a gaggle of maladjusted kids — the gluttonous Gloop (Orion Van Buskirk), the narcissistic brat Veruca Salt (Emily Westlund), the indulgent Violet Beauregarde (Jane Brinkley, daughter of *EW* contributor Rachael Carnes) and the materialistic Mike Teavee (Manny Longnight) — speaks to the heart of our best and worst tendencies, and never more than now.

Directed by Joe Zingo and based on the musical adaptation of Dahl's legendary book, ACE's production of *Willy Wonka* is more streamlined than the film versions, though it doesn't lack in magical, almost cinematic elements: The elaborate stage recreations of Wonka's factory are sugary and surreal, the costumes are superb and the musical numbers surprisingly strong. The large cast reveals the best of community theater, with actors as young as 7 striding the stage alongside the adults.

As I beheld the action on stage, enjoying myself but with that undercurrent of nihilistic dread that seems to contaminate everything these days, I realized that Willy Wonka himself is a kind of stand-in for divine justice — fate, karma, the Holy Ghost, what have you — and that everything that goes down in that factory is a meditation on the ways our basest desires — our Gloopian greed and gluttony, our salty and self-centered disregard — gum up the social contract.

In the end, it's Charlie who, with his honesty and compassion and humanity, is granted the keys to the works. This is a good lesson for kids. It's a good lesson for me. Be like Charlie.

(Even if, in real life, Augustus Gloop steals the factory, deports all Oompa Loompas, contaminates the chocolate, imprisons Charlie as a terrorist, waterboards Grandpa Joe and pimps out Veruca Salt ...)

Roald Dahl's *Willy Wonka* continues through Dec. 17 at Actors Cabaret of Eugene; \$16-\$37.95, tickets at actorscabaret.org or 541-683-4368.