

VERY LITTLE THEATRE

VLT

AUDITIONS

As You Like It

Romantic Comedy by William Shakespeare

Sat., April 8 • Noon
Sun., April 9 • 4 pm
2350 Hilyard St.

Roles for 12 men, ages 20s-90s, and 6 women, ages 20s-60s, plus parts for off-beat musical skills.

For more info, contact director Darlene Rhoden at darmor565@msn.com
More details at VLT website:

TheVLT.com

VLT

88th SEASON!

The Very Little Theatre presents

Dear World

A brilliant, tender, and funny musical by Jerry Herman
Directed by Michael P. Watkins

March 24-26,
March 30-April 2,
April 6-8

7:30 pm curtain; 2 pm Sundays

Tix: \$23; \$19 Seniors & Students

\$19 for everyone on Thursdays!

Box office open 2:00-6:00 pm

Wed.-Sat., 2350 Hilyard St.

Tix on-line at TheVLT.com

541-344-7751

MUSIC

BY KELSEY ANNE RANKIN

THE SLANTS

The Asian-American band that mustn't be named is playing in Eugene

Artists live at the crossroads of the active and the passive, between merely creating and sharing or creating and engaging with the broader community.

Asian-American pop-punk band The Slants perfectly represent the latter by intertwining their classic punk sound with a fight for social justice.

The Slants are a Portland-based band with four members who bring their quirky personalities to the stage and studio. Simon Tam, the group's founder and bassist (also, official band mom), giggles while he lists off the comically diverse traits of his fellow band mates:

Joe Jiang (guitar) is a pop star through and through, while Yuya Matsuda (drums) is a modest percussive genius who creates a balanced recipe for each song. Ken Shima (lead vocals), Tam laughs, is the band's theatrical release — he's classically trained with an over-the-top attitude.

Together, The Slants have geared their energy towards creating a fresh sound with pop and acoustic influences — and contagiously danceable beats — as opposed to the heavier, Ramones-esque sound of their past.

Changing their sound (and a few band members along the way) is merely the tip of the iceberg for The Slants. "In addition to playing music and putting on concerts," Tam says, "we do workshops on race diversity, equity and inclusion for different organizations."

In December 2016, the group got involved with the anti-bullying organization Act to Change, a White House initiative focusing on Asian-American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities.

"We were bringing more awareness to issues of oppression by using our art as a platform," Tam says. The Slants created a compilation album for the organization while working with then-President Barack Obama and other heavy-hitting names in the social justice arena to bring various recourses to the marginalized community.

"The White House wouldn't work with us if we were doing something racist or contrary to their values," Tam explains in borderline comedic tone. His humor stems from his other encounter with the United States government: a legal battle to trademark the possibly offensive band name.

In the early 2000s, Tam brought "The Slants" to the United States Patent and Trademark Office in order to legally protect the band's name. The USPTO denied his request, claiming that "slant" is a racial slur.

USPTO is the same office that approved the name of the Washington Redskins, Tam notes.

According to Tam, the USPTO's denial was based on information sourced from Urban Dictionary, an alternative dictionary website for slang often not found in Merriam Webster. "They used urbandictionary.com to support their decision," he says. "If you can't use that [website] in a middle school or high school classroom, why is the federal court of law using this?"

Tam explains how the USPTO showed more concern for appearing racist than understanding racism itself. "In almost a decade of fighting this [case]," he says, "the trademark office didn't actually speak to a single Asian-American group."

In response, Tam, his former and current bandmates and other community members created and gathered data from a survey that specifically asked AAPI communities about the issue. Tam says there was overwhelming support for the band's name and stance — by reclaiming a racial slur, marginalized communities gain a sense of empowerment.

On Jan. 18, The Slants brought the case — recognized by the court system as *Lee v. Tam* — to the U.S. Supreme Court and will, they hope, receive a decision in June. As for the cherry on top, the band released an open letter to USPTO — the powered-up pop-rock song "From the Heart" — on the day of their high-court hearing.

While they await the decision, the band will be touring across the nation with their latest EP, *The Band Who Must Not Be Named*.

"There is this legend that if you fold a thousand paper cranes," Tam says, "your innermost desire or wish will come true. The gods will grant you help in your quest."

In each physical copy of the EP, The Slants have included instructions and origami paper needed to fold a paper crane.



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The Slants play with Race Car Romeos 9 pm Saturday, April 1, at Black Forest; no cover charge, 21 and up.