

en Scheeland, who has served as board president both in the '80s and now. She became involved with the community theater in 1969, at the age of 23.

Cast members of *Perfect Wedding* rehearsed in the building almost every weeknight last spring. One night in May — three weeks from opening — the cast was deep into the rehearsal process, running the second act. A pale pink and green set, resembling the ornate bridal suite of an English inn, was in place on VLT's main stage.

Scheeland sat in the audience, taking notes, chuckling and sometimes nodding her head. Every so often an actor would shout "Line!" or slip out of his or her British accent. Scheeland, who is originally from England and studied at Loughborough University in Leicestershire, would correct the actor, and the run-through would move on.

When the actors finished the scene, they all sat on stage, some perched on chairs from the set, others on the stage itself.

The cast of six comes from a slew of backgrounds and occupations. Some have previous experiences from theater in high school and college or are members of VLT, but others auditioned for the show without any previous experience in the theater arts.

Diana Sobczynski, a compensation analyst in human resources at the University of Oregon, auditioned for *Perfect Wedding* because a colleague from work "dragged" her along.

"I was asked by a friend who has a new motto for the year, and it's to try things that scare her a little bit," Sobczynski said. She ended up being cast as Rachel, the bride-to-be — her first acting role anywhere.

Sobczynski plays in a band in town and mentioned a concert of hers to her fellow cast members. They ended up com-



DIRECTOR AND VLT BOARD PRESIDENT KAREN SCHEELAND (CENTER) AND HER *PERFECT WEDDING* PRODUCTION CREW

ing to her performance, even though it was early on in the rehearsal process and the cast members weren't as close yet. "I was so touched that they would come out and support me without knowing me very well," she said.

Coming into rehearsal at 5:30 pm, right after work, was challenging at first. "You have your everyday life and whatever you do — class, work — and then suddenly you have to be somebody else."

"I hope that I don't speed things up. When I perform, I do get nervous. I turn that nervousness into energy and I get very energetic," Sobczynski said.

Despite the play's action taking place during her character's wedding day, Sobczynski wanted to make sure her energy level wasn't too over the top.

Craig Willis, executive director of local professional theater company the Oregon Contemporary Theatre, sees the

Very Little Theatre as a "learning ground" and "community gathering place" for local talent.

"As a true community theater, except for a handful of people who are building sets, they are doing it as volunteers," Willis said. "The nature of [this] community is such that it's great that people from a whole variety of skill sets have opportunities to be involved — in ways from just volunteering the way they can at Oregon Contemporary Theatre to directing, stage management or acting."

Scheeland says the theater wants to expand out into the community and recruit more volunteers. She wants to bring in a new generation to keep VLT going while still satisfying current members' wants and needs.

The theater's 89th season features some heavy hitters, Scheeland says. She's particularly excited for the winter show, Matthew Lopez's *The Whipping Man*, a play about a Jewish man in the post-Civil War South.

On June 9, *Perfect Wedding* opened on VLT's mainstage. The show ran through June 24.

Sobczynski's nerves held up. Her character's pointed dialogue and anxiety about the wedding day was in direct contrast to Sobczynski's personality during the interview: She was acting.

As the cast came on for their last bow, its members were still in character, some smiling, some grimacing.

"You're thrown into this troupe of people you don't know," Sobczynski said later. "You don't know the director. You don't know the stage manager. You don't know your actors, your co-actors and suddenly it's coming to life. You get to know each other and you build these relationships. Suddenly you have a performance, and it's really phenomenal." ■

To audition for a play or volunteer to help out at Very Little Theatre, go to TheVLT.com/participate.html.

AFTER 14 YEARS: THE REUNION TOUR

HANUMAN

ACOUSTIC FREE FOLK FUNK

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 8TH

DOORS 8PM
SHOW AT 9PM
\$10 ADVANCE
\$12 DAY OF SHOW
AGES 21+

44 EAST 7TH AVE
EUGENE OREGON

HIFI HIFIMUSICHALL.COM
MUSIC HALL [541] 636-3292

TICKET OUTLETS: HI-FI MUSIC HALL, EMU, CD WORLD, AMAZON ORGANICS

Ninth Annual
Sunday,
September 10, 2017
10 a.m.—4 p.m.

BRING Home and Garden Tour

The Art of Sustainable Living

A self-guided tour of nine homes and gardens
Get ideas and inspiration for low-impact living:

- ☀ Green building
- ☀ Energy efficiency
- ☀ Urban agriculture
- ☀ Outdoor living
- ☀ Artistic reuse
- ☀ Aging in place

Tickets
\$10 in advance
\$14 day of Tour
Available at BRING, Down to Earth, Lane Forest Products or online at bringrecycling.org

Co-hosted by

After Party!
Sponsored by GloryBee
Hot Mama's
At Oakway Center
3 p.m. — 6 p.m.
Check out our Electric Vehicle Expo!

Sponsored by

bringrecycling.org | (541) 746-3023 | 4446 Franklin Blvd., Eugene, OR
©2017 BRING Recycling | Photo by Michael Wherley | Design by Annie Vrijmoet