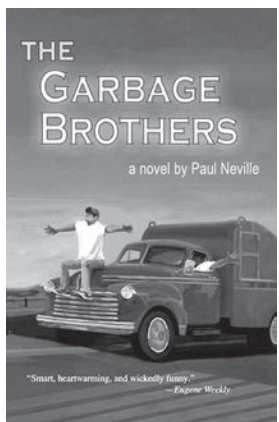


Booked at the Fair

OREGON AUTHORS OFFER THEIR WORK AT THE LANE COUNTY FAIR

By William L. Sullivan



Many of the 27 Oregon authors appearing at the Lane County Fair July 19 to 23 will be bringing books that have been published within the last few months. The county fair is perhaps best known for quilts, rabbits and fried food, but for 20 years it has also been a venue for local authors to discuss and autograph their recent work.

Two of the most innovative debut novels deal with teenage summer jobs. Paul Neville worked for nearly four decades as an award-winning editor and reporter at *The Register-Guard*. In retirement he's written *The Garbage Brothers*, a hilarious novel that's loosely based on the summer he worked for a garbage collection company in Chicago. Neville will be at the fair 5 to 7 pm Friday, July 21.

Terry Evers is now an elementary educator in Keizer

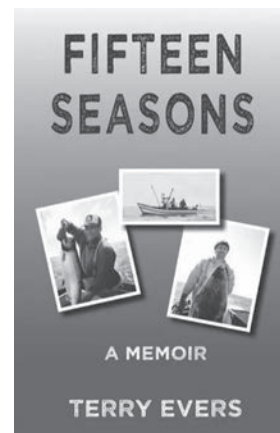
with two grown daughters. But when Evers was 13, his father quit a job as a textbook salesman, bought a salmon-fishing dory, and took him out for a summer's work. *Fifteen Seasons: A Memoir* tells the ups and downs of learning to be a commercial fisherman alongside his dad. Evers will be at the fair 3 to 7 pm Wednesday, July 19.

Dorcas Smucker, a common-sense mom from a Harrisburg farm, was for years one of the most popular columnists at *The Register-Guard*. From 2006 to 2020 she published six book-length collections of her newspaper essays. And now she has released what she claims will be her final collection, *Coming Home to Roost: A Mennonite Mom Reflects on Life Choices, Adult Children, and Country Living*. Smucker will be at the county fair 1 to 7 pm Thursday and 11 am to 3 pm Saturday.

Murder and Mayhem is the title of Jennifer Chambers' latest nonfiction book. Chambers is best known for her biographies of pioneer women, *Remarkable Oregon Women: Revolutionaries & Visionaries*. Her new book is sensational in a different way, describing a dozen of the Willamette Valley's most blood-curdling murder cases. Chambers will be at the fair all day Wednesday and Friday.

The Oregon Authors Table is in the fair's Performance Hall beside the doors to the glass-roofed atrium. Because the table has room for only about six authors at a time, check the schedule at OregonHiking.com/william-l-sullivan/lane-county-fair-authors if you want to meet a specific author. ■

The Lane County Fair runs Wednesday, July 19, through Sunday, July 23, at the Lane Events Center, 13th and Jefferson. Admission is \$9 for adults, \$7 seniors and youth, free 5 and under, with numerous discounts available. Parking is \$5, cash only. Hours are 11 am to 11 pm Wednesday through Saturday and 11 am to 8 pm Sunday; no admission within an hour of closing.



theater

A Brilliant Con Job

THE SHEDD'S *MUSIC MAN* MARCHES STRAIGHT INTO THE HEART

By Dorothy Velasco

Once in a while professional stage director Kirk Boyd comes out of retirement to give local theater lovers a welcome taste of his theatrical magic. After a long career working at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and later managing his own Willamette Repertory Theatre in Eugene, he knows exactly how to satisfy audiences yearning to be surprised, delighted and enlightened, even if they may have seen a show numerous times.

With his direction of Meredith Willson's *The Music Man*, which opened at The Shedd July 7, he does precisely that, helped by music director Robert Ashens and a large cast of all ages brimming with talent. So many actors have performed over the years at The Shedd that they seem like an extended family, and indeed, some of them are members of three actual families.

I'm sure you know the plot. Charming con artist travels the country circa 1912, selling mail-order musical instruments and uniforms with the promise of forming a kids' band (no longer designated as a "boys' band" in recent productions). Since he knows nothing about music, in each town he cozies up to the local piano teacher, getting her to corroborate the need for a band.

But in quaint River City, Iowa, known for its stubborn population, he meets his nemesis. He falls in love with Marian Paroo, a 26-year-old librarian-piano teacher (beautifully played by Cyra Conforth), and reveals an unexpected streak of kindness when he learns that her little brother Winthrop (delightful Eliyah Chandler) suffers from a serious lisp and the loss of his father.

When the inimitable Robert Preston portrayed Harold Hill in the first Broadway run of *The Music Man* starting in 1957, he was 39 years old. For the 1962 movie, he was 44. No wonder Harold was ready to settle down with Marian, even though he didn't know it.

The Shedd's Harold Hill, Tate Foshay, a college senior, is considerably younger. Without strictly imitating Preston's Hill, Foshay instead seems to channel Hill's ambitious and slightly desperate spirit.

The River City that Hill encounters is full of eccentric characters. He manages to transform a feuding school board, played by Mark Norwood, Matthew Leach, Nehemiah Nance and Owen Colley, into a harmonious barber-shop quartet.

Blustery Mayor Shinn (Earl Ruttencutter) mangles his words so badly that he could serve as an example for Winthrop. A lisp won't hold him back in life. Heidi Turnquist is formidable as Eulalie, the mayor's wife. Isabella Willis is amusing as their daughter Zaneeta, as is Matthew

Michaels as Zaneeta's secret boyfriend, Tommy Djilas.

The songs are as good as it gets in musical theater — every single one. "Seventy-Six Trombones," "Ya Got Trouble," "Marian the Librarian," "The Wells Fargo Wagon," "Till There Was You" and all the others.

The Music Man is one of musical theater's most uplifting, nostalgic portrayals of life in Middle America, life as we might imagine it during a happy, innocent time. But after seeing productions of it for nearly my whole life, I'm discovering a deeper meaning, and I can't help thinking about what could happen to the characters after the play ends.

The mainstream folks are confident they are good and generous, while immigrant families live on the wrong side of town, struggling to gain an education and make a decent living. In 1912, women wouldn't get the vote on a national level for eight more years. In a few years, both the affluent young men and the immigrants (and female nurses and doctors) would march to a world war. Would smart but disadvantaged Tommy Djilas distinguish himself as a war hero, marry the mayor's daughter and become a bank manager? Or would he even come home alive?

And looking back to Harold Hill's childhood, do we imagine another smart but disadvantaged kid from the wrong part of town, one who finds success as a traveling con artist? After all, Harold Hill isn't even his real name. Has he never married because he never felt worthy of a fine woman like Marian Paroo?

Well, this is fun to ponder. Clearly, *The Music Man* is not merely a brilliant feel-good musical; it's a complicated crazy quilt containing layers of philosophies to uncover. ■

The Music Man is playing at The Shedd through July 23; times and tickets through TheShedd.org/MusicMan or 541-434-7000.