



PHOTOS BY COLIN MURPHEY/THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Director George Dzundza and the cast of 'Doubt' discuss the production after a recent dress rehearsal of the play in Nehalem.

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of the play is to allow the audience to — in exploring their own prejudices — to see what they feel is true, whether he's innocent, or whether she's correct."

And there's another wrinkle: The alleged victim, Donald Muller, is the school's first and only black student, a boy beaten at home and alienated from his white classmates. Father Flynn has taken him under his protection. If Sister Aloysius's suspicions are wrong, she not only destroys Flynn's reputation, she takes away the boy's only ally.

"The one thing that every character in this play has in common is, we are out to protect the child," said Margaret Page, who plays Sister Aloysius.

'Something special'

"Doubt," which began rehearsals last fall, is Rising Tide's second production. In 2016, the theater company staged "I Am

My Own Wife," another play that explores the humanity of individuals and challenges the moral sensibilities of viewers.

The company has chosen to put on one carefully selected production each year and fine-tune it over many months.

"We dedicate ourselves to try to make it an event, to make it something special," Dzundza said. "It does my heart really good to see how hard everybody works, and how committed they are to the process."

Assistant Director Scott Campbell said community theater is a "really rewarding experience," but participants "have to realize it's work."

"You know, a lot of people do community theater as a romp sort of thing. It's a bucket list deal or whatever," he said. But Rising Tide Productions is "for people who want to be a little bit more serious about developing a character and learning what it's like to try to do that process."

Doubts

The play is shot through with doubts.

In the foreground is the uncertainty surrounding what happened in the rectory, and how the opposing sides — the implacable nun and the accused priest — can make the truth known.

"Father Flynn has a lot of doubt in simply how to address the issue and not just have it explode," said Joseph Oyala, of Cannon Beach, who plays the priest.

Meanwhile, the characters suspect each others' motives, even raise the issue of questioning faith in God.

Finally, the audience is asked to question their reaction to the drama, whether they can be counted on to be fair-minded in a situation where the stakes are high but proof doesn't point either way.

"I was trying very hard to make somebody who hadn't seen it before be unsure of his own footing," said Dzundza, who added that much of the play's value is in the discussion it provokes.

Ben Ruderman, a stage technician, said,



Joseph Oyala performs a monologue during a dress rehearsal of 'Doubt' in Nehalem at the North County Recreation District Performing Arts Center.

IF YOU GO

What: "Doubt, A Parable" by John Patrick Shanley (contains adult content)

When: 7 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, July 14 and 15, 21 and 22, 28 and 29; 2 p.m. Sundays, July 16, 23 and 30.

Where: North County Recreation District Performing Arts Center, 36155 9th St., Nehalem

Who: Directed by George Dzundza. Starring Margaret Page, Joseph Oyala, Brenna Sage and Sue Meyers Neuer

Tickets \$20, available at the door; cash and checks only

"At one point in the rehearsal process, I was like, 'This person's right.' And then I'm like, 'Oh, no, maybe I'm rooting for the other one.' And now I'm like: 'I'm in doubt,'" he said.

The beauty of theater

By not giving any more information than what is exchanged between the characters — by not making the truth clear, or the heroes and villains readily obvious — the play allows the audience to examine their own state of doubt.

"The theater's a remarkable tool for that, because it allows you to sit and have private, personal thoughts about a situation," Dzundza said. "And the beauty of it is that every person is seeing a different play; every person is seeing the play in the privacy of their eyes and ears."

The experience of attending live theater is "extremely personal," Dzundza said. "And I think it's the way that we grow as a culture." 