

Continued from Page 9

A tragic farce

This play, "The Father," is not related to Swedish playwright August Strindberg's 1887 work with the same title, which touched on madness but focused more on women's restricted roles in society.

Instead, it seeks to tell the story through the main character with dementia, a broad term for brain disease. An estimated 1 in 3 people aged 85 or older will experience it — and there is no known cure.

"A Tragic Farce" is the subtitle and that's a real clue to how to perform it," said James, who co-directs the show with Brown. "Part of the attraction of the piece is the fact that dementia is something we know little about. It is pushed undercover sometimes and only certain members of the family are privy to grandfather's dementia.

"Part of the magic of this play is the playwright tries to present to the audience the experience of dementia — they see dementia through his eyes."

One of the most heart-breaking elements is when dementia patients no longer recognize family or caregivers. "Strangers are shown into



PATRICK WEBB PHOTOS

Not all caregivers have the interests of their patients at heart. Bill Ham plays many characters in 'The Father,' including this unnamed man who appears ready to abuse a dementia patient, played by Edward James.

his apartment, portrayed by different actors," James added. "It becomes like a mystery ... it is bewildering." In the play, Andre laments, "I don't know anybody."

Additionally, short-term memory may totally diminish, but long-term memories may remain vivid. Critics have highlighted how the writer, Zeller, cleverly demonstrates

variations with time in the play's 15 scenes. Andre believes his watch has been



Gigi Chadwick plays multiple roles in 'The Father' at the Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall in Astoria this weekend. Here she is a carer for patient Andre (Edward James).

stolen, and that becomes one of his obsessions. The location of the action is also sometimes in question, as are the identities of the characters.

"Memory is about being able to follow a time line," said James. "What day is it? Memory is able to perceive that passage of time, but

he's going back and forth in history."

Teach and provoke

Daric Moore plays the daughter's boyfriend, who offers support when her character expresses guilt about focusing on her life. Gigi Chadwick and Bill Ham appear in an assortment of roles which move the action in puzzling directions.

"The script draws you in, but the time line jumps back and forth," said Chadwick, who experienced the dementia of her late mother and grandmother and now is going through it with her older sister, who lives out of state. "It's extremely difficult. When it is someone you love and care about, you try to be as patient as you can," she said.

Brown, the co-director, said younger people should find the story interesting if they observe their parents, aunts and uncles dealing with grandparents who have

dementia; they realize that as years pass, they may become the caregiver for their parents.

Its impact will be entirely personal. "It's impossible to be interpreted in a black-and-white way," Brown said. "In many ways, it is a mystery."

The two directors hope the production will fulfill the AAUW's goal of highlighting the impact of dementia on families, a theme which featured prominently in a recent panel discussion.

"We need to think about it more, and that's what theater does," James said. "One of the functions of theater is to teach and provoke."

Roles become inverted in a most stressful manner when grown children become their parents' caregivers.

"It presents the conflict for the family — 'What do we do with crazy papa?'" he said. "One in two, or one in three families is going to go through this ... adults having to guide older adults as their roles reverse." 

Crossword Answers

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THANK YOU, SEASIDE!



Hood To Coast / Portland To Coast Relays would like to thank the City of Seaside, Seaside Fire and Rescue, Seaside Police Department, and Seaside Chamber of Commerce for hosting the 37th HTC/PTC Relays Finish Party. Your beautiful city and county were on display this year for participants from all 50 U.S. States and 43 countries. We would also like to thank Clatsop County public safety, residents, and businesses for your patience and support. \$19,000 will again be donated to Seaside Parks and Recreation.

With more than 60,000 individuals visiting Seaside for The Hood and Portland To Coast Relays, this visit represents a first impression to a captive audience that very often leads to future visits for these individuals and their families. This is an economic impact that goes beyond measure and one that can very often be a lifelong development of future memories in your town.

Additionally, participants raised a record amount of over \$850,000, which benefits Providence Cancer Institute and their continuous efforts to find a cure for cancer.

Thank you Seaside, for supporting the race for 29 years in your community! We look forward to many more fantastic race finishes in Seaside. Special thanks to all the amazing charities on course; runners and walkers loved everything you provided, and we hope you continue to raise money for your charities in future years.

Looking forward to seeing you all in 2019!

