

TAKING THE IMAGINARY AND MAKING IT REAL IN 'BUNBURY'

By NICOLE BALES
FOR COAST WEEKEND

CANNON BEACH — In Oscar Wilde's play, "The Importance of Being Earnest, A Trivial Comedy for Serious People," the character Bunbury was a figment of Algernon Moncrieff's imagination. Although never onstage himself, Bunbury was noted for always seeming to pull Algernon away from obligations at most opportune times.

At Coaster Theatre, this time Bunbury will take center stage as he goes back in pursuit of changing literary history in Tom Jacobson's "Bunbury."

"We start to discuss what would happen if Romeo had stayed with Rosaline instead of Juliet," said Richard Bowman, who plays Bunbury. "How that would that have changed things, and then that what starts the course and gets the ball rolling of 'oh, what would happen if I go and change this?'"

Rosaline, who was only briefly mentioned in "Romeo and Juliet" as Romeo's first admirer and Juliet's cousin, also gets the opportunity to finally shine onstage. Together Bunbury and Rosaline go back to "Romeo and Juliet" to change the course of history.

Ryan Hull, the director of "Bunbury" said a recurring theme in the show is characters who were originally only used as plot devices now taking on a central role in "Bunbury."

"There's Allen from 'A Streetcar Named Desire' who is Blanche's husband and is talked about but never seen in the show," Ryan said. "There is Jim from 'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf,' he's talked about, but never in the show. So that's what happens throughout the show is you get to see some of these people who were talked about, but never seen."

Fictional, unseen and imaginary characters from plays throughout history come together to prove that, although they may go unappreciated, they are not trivial characters, and in fact, they single-handedly shaped the literature.

"For me, there are two overarching themes of this play," said Jenni Tronier who



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plays Rosaline. "One is there is that drive of Bunbury and Rosaline to prove that they are not trivial characters, that they are substantial characters and that they matter in the world, but also the question of, if you change literature, can you change history. Does literature affect the historical arch of the world? What is that delicate balance of art imitating life and life imitating art?"

Jenni and Richard were both in a past production of "The Importance of Being Earnest" with Richard playing Algernon and Jenni playing Gwendolen Fairfax. Richard said it is fun to think back to his role as Algernon to help inform his current



role as Bunbury.

"The concept is so fun and just different," Jenni said. "I describe it to many people as a literary adventure because that's really what it is. It's these two characters going through all these different well-known, and some not-so-well-known, literary pieces."

Theatergoers may be surprised to see what happens, but Bunbury and Rosaline will make the most of their time in the limelight.

"Normally Romeo and Juliet both die, they don't die," Ryan said. "They change Romeo and Juliet so it's no longer the trag-

"Bunbury"

When: May 3-26, 2019; All performances begin at 7:30 pm

Where: Coaster Theatre Playhouse, 108 N Hemlock St., Cannon Beach

Tickets: <https://coastertheatre.com/box-office/> or at Coaster Theatre Playhouse box office.



edy of Romeo and Juliet, it's the romance of Romeo and Juliet. So because of that one change, it ripples through literature for centuries."

Veterans and newcomers

This will be the first time Bunbury is appearing at the Coaster Theatre and the cast includes veterans and new actors. Ryan said the theater is always looking for new actors on the north coast who want to have fun.

"The Coaster Theatre started when the community got together and just started producing the Dickens play and it was a community event for many years so that is a lot of people's tradition on the North Coast is to come to see the holiday show," Jenni said.

The Coaster Theatre was converted from an old skating rink and opened in 1972. Every year they produce five plays and two musicals.

"The Coaster Theatre is very unique in that we are a tourist destination theatre," Jenni said. "We have a very strong local support for this theater. Not only on stage but off stage ... we have a lot of history here." 