

**A REVIEW OF
CLASS ACT THEATRE'S
"PROOF"**

**BY BURNEY
GARELICK**

Reading and writing were a breeze for me, but arithmetic was my nemesis. Algebra was anathema. Not so for the protagonist of "Proof." Catherine (Cara Beere) is a mathematical wizard, but it scares her. It is her burden of proof.

"Proof," a beautifully written play by David Auburn, scored accolades on Broadway in 2000 and was made into a movie in 2005. "Proof" takes the stage this weekend and next at Class Act Theatre (CAT), 509 Kingwood St., the final play in CAT's three-year lifespan.

CAT's closing is amicable. Proprietors Rosemary and David Lauria are setting off for new adventures, but their love for theater will surely bring them back to town.

The best stories are about human relationships, and "Proof" is about fathers and daughters, teachers and students, sibling rivalry and lusty romantic entanglements. While "Proof" is pockmarked with mathematics, it is not about math. There are no equations, theories or algorithms to memorize and no test to take.

CAT's stage is transformed into the comfortable back porch of an old house on the campus of the University of Chicago.

Recently deceased Robert (David Lauria), Catherine's father, was a mathematical genius, recognized far and wide, until he suffered a setback — incurable dementia. Like a dead man walking, Robert appears alive and well in flashbacks with Catherine who put her life on hold to care for him 24-7.

Father and daughter ramble about the old messy house, cold in winter with banging radiators, squabbling

CAT TO NAP AFTER ELEGANT 'PROOF'

over too much pasta and borrowing tons of library books to find the alien code in the Dewey Decimal System. Even as they revel in each other's company, Catherine is terrified that she'll inherit his illness.

A remission in Robert's dementia delights Catherine, who enrolls at Northwestern University to study math. But the reprieve doesn't last, and in the most poignant moment in the play, we see Robert regress, sending him back to filling notebooks with gibberish and sending her back to care for him.

Catherine is 25 when her father dies. Her grieving is complicated — she is exhausted, depressed, angry and crabby. We share her

visceral feeling by being glued to our seats.

When the tension becomes unbearable, Hal (Alex Grady) streams in like geeky sunshine. He is Robert's former student, a young mathematician looking to make his own fame. He is reviewing Robert's notebooks just in case there is something of value.

Eventually, Catherine loosens up and romance buds and consummates. Her bliss allows her to share a special notebook with her paramour.

The fourth character is Claire (Tamara Szalewski), Catherine's sister, who arrives from New York for the funeral, to sell the house and to take Catherine away to

Manhattan.

Catherine's animosity is as palpable as her depression, while Claire treats Catherine with kid gloves as though she is as demented as their father.

The crisis comes after Hal reads the special notebook and discovers what he believes is Robert's most elegant proof and Catherine says she wrote it — but neither Hal nor Claire think she is capable of such.

All four actors are brilliant, so intensely absorbed in their characters that we share their intimacy, and the world outside the theater ceases to exist.

Lauria, an acting powerhouse,

proves once again with poetry and humor his command of a difficult character.

Beere, a Florence newcomer in her first major role, is astonishing, swirling a kaleidoscope of moody blues and unfulfilled dreams into memorable moments.

Grady performs with such enthusiasm that we relish his every entrance and long to hear his math geek rock band.

Szalewski is triumphant, skillfully underplaying the well-intentioned caretaker who doesn't have a clue.

Coincidentally, Szalewski was featured in CAT's first production,

"Grace and Glorie," and Grady played two characters in CAT's hilarious "Sylvia." It's a sweet note of closure for this elegant theater.

Jim Wellington, versatile actor in numerous local productions, takes on the directing chores, proving his mastery of theater arts, even adding appropriate ambiance between the scenes with incidental minimal music by Philip Glass, other-worldly notes sprinkling numbers over the stage.

CAT's final production is a glistering gem, but the proof is in the pudding. See for yourself.

For tickets or more information, visit catproductions.org.



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THIS WEEK ON THE COAST

A WEEKLY LISTING OF COMMUNITY EVENTS IN THE FLORENCE AREA

SUBMIT ALL EVENTS INFORMATION VIA EMAIL TO PRESSRELEASES@THESIUSLAWNEWS.COM

Mondays

Walk with a Ranger
With Cape Perpetua Marine Reserve and Siuslaw National Forest
Noon
Open to public
Cape Perpetua Visitor Center
541-547-3289

Tuesdays

Yoga for Pain Management & Easeful Body
Sponsored by PeaceHealth Peace Harbor
2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Free and drop-ins welcome
Lane Community College Florence Center

Florence Farmers Market
3 to 7 p.m.
Open to public
Kingwood and Bay streets

Wednesdays

Guided Hike: There Is More Beneath the Surface
With Cape Perpetua Marine Reserve and Siuslaw National Forest
11 a.m.
Open to public
Cape Perpetua Visitor Center
541-547-3289

Points of Grace Community Acupuncture
Experience relief from pain and stress
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Donations appreciated
1845 Highway 126

Weekends

Florence Oregon Boardwalk Market Crafter's Market
Saturday — 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Saturday — 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Port of Siuslaw Boardwalk

**Aug. 18 to 19 and
Aug. 24 to 26**

"Proof"
7 p.m. — Fridays and Saturdays
2 p.m. — Sundays
Tickets required
Class Act Theatre, 509 Kingwood St.

Aug. 18

Summer Rummage Sale
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Kitchen open with soup, sandwiches and dessert
Ada Grange #570, 10 miles out Canary Road
541-997-6933

21st annual Florence Coin Show
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Open to public
Florence Events Center

Loved Again Pets Dog Adoption/Foster Event
Noon to 3 p.m.
Open to public
Hometown Pets, 2107 Highway 101

Pottery & Sip Class with Carol Mast
Carve, glaze or create your own design
5:15 to 8:30 p.m.
Tickets required
Mindpower Gallery, 417 Fir Ave., Reedsport
541-271-2485

Live music by Dusty Herd
6 to 9 p.m.
Open to public
Travelers Cove, 1362 Bay St.

"Hush" — CROW Advanced Acting Program One-Act Show
Featuring "Just Like I Wanted" by Rebecca Scholssberg and "I Don't Want To Talk About It" by Bradley Hayward
7 p.m.
Tickets required
CROW Center for the Performing Arts, 3120 Highway 101
Crowkids.com

MainlyPiano House Concert Series: Dan Chadburn
A benefit for Oregon Coast Humane Society
7 p.m.
\$20 suggested donation
RSVP to 541-999-9720 or kathypiano@gmail.com for address

Jesse Mead
7 p.m.
Open to public 21+
Blue Bills Sports Bar at Three Rivers Casino, 5647 Highway 126

Aug. 19

21st annual Florence Coin Show
10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Open to public
Florence Events Center

Aug. 21

Us TOO Florence Prostate Cancer Support

Group
With Dr. Roger McKimmy
Noon to 1 p.m.
Open to public
Ichiban Restaurant
541-999-4239

Caregiver Support Group
6 p.m.
Open to public
Spruce Point Assisted Living & Memory Care, 375 Ninth St.

Aug. 23

Community Chorus Registration for the Christmas Concert
Conducted by David Aakre
6:30 p.m.
Open to public
Presbyterian Church of the Siuslaw, 3996 Highway 101
541-997-3469, www.communitychorusflorenceoregon.org

Aug. 24

Allen Giardinelli Hot Club Quintet
7 p.m.
Open to public 21+
Blue Bills Sports Bar at Three Rivers Casino, 5647 Highway 126

Aug. 25

Be Ready — Storm Ready Expo
Presented by Siuslaw News and Western Lane Emergency Operations Group
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
11 a.m. to 3 p.m. — Kiwanis provides free hot dog lunch
Open to public at Florence Events Center

Open House for Siuslaw Partnership to Prevent Substance Abuse
1:30 to 4:00 p.m.
Open to public
Bromley Room of the Siuslaw Public Library sapsa.org

Oregon Coast Military Museum's Military Heritage Day
With Capt. Sharon Armstrong, USCGR (Ret), and Elizabeth Estabrooks, Women Veterans Coordinator for the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs
2 to 4 p.m.
Open to public
Sam Spayd's Hangar at the Florence Municipal Airport
oregoncoastmilitarymuseum.com/

Allen Giardinelli Hot Club Quintet
7 p.m.
Open to public 21+
Blue Bills Sports Bar at Three Rivers Casino, 5647 Highway 126

Aug. 26

Tidepool Exploration at Strawberry Hill
With CoastWatch Volunteer Coordinator Fawn Custer
8 a.m. to noon
Open to public
Strawberry Hill Wayside, 95720 Highway 101
541-270-0027

The Diabetes/Prediabetes Support Group meetings will resume in September.

Visit rivercal.org for more calendar events.

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