

# The 'Proof' is in the relationships for Cottage Theatre actors

BY MATT HOLLANDER  
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Earlier this spring, Cottage Theatre hit an all-time high during its sold-out run of "Les Misérables." And while patrons will no doubt notice a dramatic difference in tone and magnitude in its current show, "Proof," the intimate cast of four delivers a powerful follow-up to the epic Broadway musical.

"Moving from Les Mis was a jolting difference in terms of rhythm and pace," said Alan Beck, who directed both shows. "It felt luxurious to be able to concentrate on four characters instead of 34 and one set instead of 14 sets."

Written in 2000 by American playwright David Auburn, "Proof," concerns Catherine (Nicole Trobaugh), a troubled young woman who has spent years caring for her brilliant but unstable father (Patrick Torelle). Now, following his death, she must deal with her own volatile emotions; the arrival of her estranged sister, Claire (Janet Whitlow); and the attentions of Hal (Kory Weimer), a former graduate student of her father's from the University of Chicago who hopes to find valuable work in the 103 notebooks that her father left behind.

Although the plot centers upon a groundbreaking mathematical proof, theater-goers won't need to brush up on their algebra to follow along. The story is about relationships — father-daugh-



From left, Hal (Kory Weimer), Catherine (Nicole Trobaugh), and Catherine's Father Robert (Patrick Torelle) play complex emotional roles in Cottage Theatre's 'Proof.'

ter, sister-sister, teacher-student, etc. — and the validation we seek through them — proof of love, trust and sanity.

For this group of actors, these themes strike an authentic chord. Trobaugh and Weimer both studied under Torelle, a professor of theater at Lane Community College, and Whitlow had to leave the show during rehearsals to deal with the death of her own father.

"These four people had such good instincts right from the very beginning of this play. It was a matter of making them comfortable developing character and relationships," said

Beck.

The degree of difficulty would seem to be the highest for Trobaugh, 28, who must run an emotional gauntlet over the course of the play and sometimes during a single scene, but she said she found it energizing to play the role of Catherine.

"I think that an actor will use their real emotional response to a situation. If they can control it and internalize it, they can bring it out through the character. Nicole brings something very special to this role. She makes me cry every night," said Beck.

While "Proof" may not be the light-hearted show that many

seek during the summer, Trobaugh believes that theater-goers will be rewarded with a lasting experience.

"So many things are strictly about entertainment. And yes, it is entertaining, but it will also make you feel something. Releasing that emotion is important, and to do it with a group of other people at the same time is cathartic," she said.

"Proof" continues at the Cottage Theatre through June 28 with Thursday, Friday and Saturday shows beginning at 8 p.m.; Sunday matinees start at 2:30.

## Disease hitting boxwood shrubs in Oregon gardens

BY KYM POKORNY  
OSU Extension Service

A disease that attacks boxwood shrubs could potentially become a serious problem in residential and public gardens in western Oregon.

Boxwood blight, which first showed up in nurseries in Oregon in 2011, is making inroads in the Portland area, according to Jay W. Pscheidt, a plant pathology specialist with Oregon State University's Extension Service.

"The message to homeowners is that if they notice something unusual going on with their boxwood they've never seen before, it could be boxwood blight," Pscheidt said.

The fungus is active during warm, wet weather, splashing from plant to plant by rain. Even though this spring has been relatively dry, overhead watering causes the same conditions so the disease can spread like any other year. Using a soaker hose will help. The sticky fungal spores easily attach to clothing, pruners or other equipment and then transfer to other boxwoods, so avoid working with wet plants.

Boxwood blight (*Calonectria pseudonaviculata*) causes spots on leaves and stems and eventually defoliates and kills the plants. Stem lesions show up as wide black streaks; on leaves they appear as round spots.

There is no cure, but prevention measures can help keep the disease from spreading, he said. The most effective method

is to inspect purchased plants and keep them in an area away from already planted boxwood for two weeks or more. If the shrubs don't show spots, they can be planted.

"That might be hard," Pscheidt said, "but the fungus can be present and the plant hasn't shown symptoms yet."

Boxwood blight emerged in Europe in the early 1990s and quickly spread. Eradication has been unsuccessful, he said. According to Pscheidt, wholesale nurseries in Oregon, which consider boxwood a bread-and-butter crop, have kept the disease mostly in check with a nursery cleanliness program administered through the Oregon Department of Agriculture. But the disease has jumped into some landscapes in Portland and Coos Bay. Now that it's made inroads into gardens, cooperation from homeowners is essential.

Here are Pscheidt's recommendations for preventing the spread of boxwood blight:

Inspect new plants and isolate them from other boxwoods for at least two weeks before planting.

Avoid overhead watering. Instead, use a soaker hose.

Don't work with wet boxwood.

Disinfect pruners and hedge clippers after use.

Never compost infected plants.

If you have a diseased plant, place it in a plastic bag and dispose of it in the garbage bin rather than yard debris recycling bin.

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