

# Depth, soul populate CT's 'Quilters'

Diverse cast turns in a powerful performance

BY JON STINNETT  
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

In a message shared with the Cottage Theatre audience in the program for CT's most recent production, "Quilters," Executive Director Susan Goes mentions some of the issues that faced the cast of 10 women and crew as they worked to bring the play to life.

"Along the way to opening night, this cast and crew dealt with aging parent issues, major surgery and the replacement of a cast member just eight days before opening," Goes wrote, continuing that "The emotions brought forth through those challenges add depth and soul to the sharing of these stories in 'Quilters.'"

The words 'depth' and 'soul' do much to describe the allure of this production, an at-times astonishingly complex story of relationships, hardships and joys, love and loss that was handled with much grace and elegance by a diverse yet cohesive Cottage Theatre cast.

Set on the American prairie in the 1800s, "Quilters" tells the tales and showcases the

struggles of the women that helped win the West, with familial bonds shaping a story set against an often stark, harsh and unforgiving landscape.

The play revolves around the last days of Sarah, mother to many daughters, who tells the story of her own life and times through the quilts she has lovingly created since her own childhood. Throughout the play, a quilt's many panels stand for the pioneer woman's many loves, losses and triumphs. "Quilters" manages to touch all bases with regard to these struggles, and to its credit, there is no attempt by writers Molly Newman and Barbara Damashek to daintify the harsh realities of living, loving and dying in an unfamiliar wilderness.

Those previously unfamiliar with "Quilters" (this reporter included) learn early on that a central aspect of the production will loom large — its music. The play is laced throughout with a stark and haunting score and effects played by musicians Catricia Mayhue, Avery Pratt and Delia House Lopez. Its (very) complex harmonies often involve the entire cast and



photo by Matt Emrich

Sarah (Eliza Roaring Springs) talks of quilts and life with her daughter (Madeleine Sisson).

do much to tell a story of depth and passion. Mayhue, who also served as music director for "Quilters," deserves much credit for bringing the stories of these pioneer women to life in sound, and each cast member can be commended for a singing job well done.

Kudos are also most certainly due to Director Eliza Roaring Springs, who brings Sarah to life with humanity that's written all over her aged face. Roaring Springs may also be commended for shepherding a truly cohesive cast through such a demanding production. Standouts

from the cast included Stefhani Anderson, who plays an engaging and earnest daughter, and Madeleine Sisson, already a CT veteran at age 16, who brings much elegance and heart to the play's action.

The quilts of many in Cottage Grove adorn the Cottage Theatre for this production, and many historical quilts will also be on display at the Cottage Grove Museum for "Cottage Quilts: Piecing Together our Past" throughout the month of August. "Quilters" continues its run at Cottage Theatre Aug. 20-23 and Aug. 27-30.

## OFFBEAT

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explosion. Within a week or two the authorities knew that had been a mistake. Rumors and whispers by Southern Oregon residents quickly escalated into wild and frightful speculations. Loggers working the woods all over the state started stepping gingerly, and production plummeted, and fear levels started to ramp up — precisely the reaction the Japanese had hoped to inspire. Belatedly, authorities realized they'd need to come clean, and so Archie Mitchell — still shaken by the tragedy that had befallen his wife and the children of his friends — was authorized to tell the reporters all.

Perhaps it worked. When the Japanese finally did surrender, two months later, their balloon bombs hadn't taken any other lives — although there's reason to suspect they did start a fairly serious forest fire, the 180,000-acre monster known as the Third Tillamook Burn, which broke out on July 9 of that year.

Four years later, the U.S. Congress approved a bill that paid a total of \$20,000 to Archie Mitchell and the families of the slain Bly children.

The members of the Mitchell picnic party have gone down in history as the only casualties of an enemy attack on the American mainland during the war ... the only casualties so far, that is. Even today, 70 years later, it's worth remembering that the Japanese launched 9,000 of these devices, each loaded with three bombs. Only 361 of them have been accounted for.

Clearly, thousands of them fell harmlessly in the Pacific Ocean ... but it's still a possibility that one or two fell unnoticed in a deep forest somewhere, and are still up there, just waiting for some careless cross-country trekker to find one of them the hard way.

(Sources: Juillerat, Lee. "Balloon bombs." The Oregon Encyclopedia (PSU and OHS), or-egonencyclopedia.org; Portland Oregonian, 6/01/45, 6/02/45, 12/30/45, 5/10/49)

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## Extend vegetable crop through fall by planting now

BY KYM POKORNY  
OSU Extension Service

Fresh vegetables can be harvested most of the year in many places in Oregon. In fact, many cool-season crops produce well in the fall and hold through the winter if protected.

"You can plant vegetables in mid- to late summer after you harvest spring crops and as space is available and in many years have a year-round garden," said Ross Penhallegon, a horticulturist with Oregon State University's Extension Service.

Some of the best vegetables are produced during the warm days and cold nights of fall, he said. Light frost adds sugar to sweet corn and crispness to carrots. Parsnips, kale, collards, Brussels sprouts and Jerusalem artichokes also improve with a touch of frost.

Succession planting is easily accomplished west of the Cascades, but east of the mountains, newly planted crops may need a cloche or cold frame to keep plants alive into the colder months and as protection against rain battering. If you'd like to build a raised bed cloche

to extend the gardening season, find directions in the free publication How to Build Your Own Raised-Bed Cloche.

Certain vegetables are better suited to fall and winter harvest than others, Penhallegon said. A complete list of recommended varieties and how to grow them can be found in the eight-page guide Fall and Winter Vegetable Gardening in the Pacific Northwest.

A key to successful fall or winter gardening is location of your garden. Choose the warmest spot you have that is not prone to early frost, avoid the bottom of a hill or an area with lots of bushes and trees. A south-facing slope is best for winter sun, he said. Be sure to restore nutrients removed by spring and summer crops with a light layer of compost or aged manure or a small application of fertilizer. Do not over-fertilize with nitrogen.

"During the rainy season, good well-drained soils are essential," Penhallegon advised. "Raised beds are best, and if your soil doesn't drain well, amend it with organic matter such as compost."

Timely planting is another

key to success. Crops need time to become well established before cold weather and short days curtail growth, but if you plant too early, the young plants can wilt in the heat or mature too soon. Choose the fastest-maturing varieties and pay attention to the average date of the first killing frost in your area. Most winter crops are planted from July through August.

You can give seeds a head start in containers or a nursery bed, or buy starts from a garden center.

Here are Penhallegon's examples of summer-into-fall plantings:

Pull out old pea vines and plant carrot seeds in their place.

Yank bolted broccoli and replace with a crop of lettuce and salad greens.

Harvest the rest of the beets and sow a crop of kale.

Replace tomatoes in the fall with an overwintering crop of garlic or shallots.

Remove your spent squash plants and put in crimson clover (a cover crop) to protect the soil over the winter.

Compost bitter lettuce and replace with a batch of scallions,

leeks or radishes.

Penhallegon suggests that a crop that fails one year because of an unusually early freeze or abnormally cold winter may thrive in a milder year. "Be willing to experiment," he said, "and don't give up if your results some years are less than ideal."



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