

"Love Letters" coming in time for Valentine's Day

The Opal Center is kicking off their 2017 Season with a romantic flavor on February 10th and 11th at 7:30 pm. The 1991 Pulitzer Prize winner in Drama, *Love Letters* by A.R. Gurney, tells the story of Andy and Melissa. These childhood friends lives are told through letters and post cards sent over a lifetime. It is a stirring tale of love, loss, and ultimately separate lives tied together through the written word. Tickets are \$12 and are available through Opal's website or at the box office at The Crafty Mercantile at 517 E Main.

Opal Center's production features Eliza Roaring Springs and Claude Offenbacher as the two protagonists. This is the first production at the Opal Center for both of these experienced actors. Claude began acting (in French, his native language) at age 10 in NYC, and, since coming to Eugene in the early 1990's, has directed or performed in more than a dozen plays -- mostly at The Very Little Theatre, where he's a Life Member, as well as two at Cottage Theatre. He also takes satisfaction in initiating the role of the late Senator Wayne Morse in Portland playwright Charles Deemer's *American Gadfly* in four Oregon cities.)

"Love Letters" speaks to him through its sensitive characterizations, as well as its personal points of contact: Like the character he plays, Claude has a Yale degree, graduate degrees from Harvard, and lived five years at a New England prep school (as a teacher). Also, Andrew is the name of the elder of his two sons. Claude is a former school administrator and, more recently, a retired KLCC news reporter and program host. "I'm delighted to again be directed by David and to once more be on-stage with Eliza, two theater

colleagues I treasure... as I do Hanna, my wife of 48 years, to whom my life is dedicated." says Offenbacher.

Eliza has been acting, directing, and writing for the theater for the last 45 years. Her most recent endeavors have been at Cottage Theatre, where she directed *A Christmas Story*, *Quilters*, and *Almost Maine*. She's had the opportunity to play many great roles, both on stage and off, but perhaps her most satisfying was as the creator of *Encore Theatre*, a senior theater company that performed plays based on their own personal experiences, performed free for young people all over Oregon.

Eliza's favorite kind of theater is very simple. It involves a good story being enacted by good actors in a simple space, made easily accessible to everyone. Opal Center seems to fill that niche very well. She is pleased to be a part of this production, and looks forward to continued involvement at Opal. (She will be directing *Talking With* there this July.) "I hope that *Love Letters* moves each of you to remember and honor both your past and present loves and friends." says Roaring Springs.

This is director David Work's fourth production at the Opal Center under his direction, although has been the producer of others since his debut at Opal with *The Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and all of Greek Mythology in *99 Minutes or Less* in 2014. He likes to find stories that play well inside Opal's 'black box' simplicity. "I'm also drawn to plays that tell a story about ordinary people and their extraordinary relationships." Work explains, "As a play about the intertwining lives of two people throughout their lives, it helps us remember our own struggles and triumphs."

Love Letters has been produced throughout the United States and around the world and has starred many of Hollywood's leading couples, including most recently, Rita Wilson and Tom Hanks in November 2016. In 1999, it was adapted by Gurney into a TV movie which starred Laura Linney and Stephen Weber. It has also been adapted into other languages around the world.

What: *Love Letters*
When: February 10th & 11th
 at 7:30 pm
Where: Opal Center for
 Arts and Education,
 513 E Main Street,
 Cottage Grove
Tickets: www.opalcentercg.org
 or at The Crafty Mercantile
Price: \$12.00
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