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Read 'em and weep, actors – Readers Theater opens Oct. 19

'Days of Our Lives' star matching wits with Web wonder

BY ROB CULLIVAN

The Gresham Outlook, Oct 13, 2009, Updated Oct 13, 2009

She starred on "Days of Our Lives," and he's starring in a haunting Web western that begins at night.

Together, Derya Ruggles and Harold Phillips will put on the first installment of Mt. Hood Repertory Readers Theater. The duo will perform Bill Manhoff's 1965 play "The Owl and The Pussycat" on Monday, Oct. 19, at Mt. Hood Community College.

The famous play, which was adapted for the silver screen as well, tells the story of a foul-mouthed hooker and a wannabe writer who eventually fall in love.

Readers Theater involves little rehearsal and no sets, and showcases actors reading the scripts of a play.

Corey Brunish, an accomplished jazz recording artist and actor who's been in films with Madonna, Heather Locklear and Willem Dafoe, among others, will direct "The Owl and The Pussycat."

Brunish notes Readers Theater highlights just how well a play's words work.



Harold Phillips, left, and Derya Ruggles will share the stage Oct. 19 at Mt. Hood Community College in "The Owl and The Pussycat." The play is the first production of the year for Readers Theater, in which actors read from scripts of plays on a stage with no sets. The shows are designed to highlight the writing of plays as opposed to elaborate props and sets.

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"It has to be good because you have to hold an audience in a trance for two hours," he says.

Seasoned stars

Ruggles is best known for playing Dr. Robin Jacobs on "Days of Our Lives" in the mid-1980s, and also has appeared on "Seinfeld" and in such movies as "Remote."

She's also done numerous voice-overs in commercials and films, and you'll be able to see her on the big screen in 2010 in the indie film "John Gets Wasted."

But it's Readers Theater that's bringing her back to her dramatic roots.

"It's the essence of what you go into the art for, instead of the ugliness of the business that made me leave," she says, noting she's put her Hollywood days behind her and prefers the Portland arts scene. "It's the creative connection, and the experience of that exchange with other people."

Like Ruggles, Phillips also has worked in film and TV, and is starring in "Animus Cross," a dark western series set in 1860s Idaho.

(You can watch it at animuscross.com, as well as his "post apocalyptic" series at ladywasteland.com). Phillips says he's an "adrenaline junkie," and enjoys winging it in Readers Theater.

"There's a certain freedom in doing a staged reading," he says. "You get to the meat of the script. You get straight out to the audience."

"As an actor, you want that tightrope experience now and then," Brunish adds.

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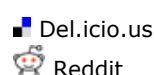
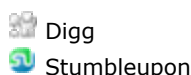
All three actors note they enjoy working with Mt. Hood Rep, and Phillips adds that he and his wife, noted Portland actress Trish Egan, have long been active with the company. The trio says East County audiences are always great to entertain.

"The crowds are very smart and enthusiastic out here," Brunish says, adding he enjoys working with pros, such as Ruggles and Phillips.



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"I've always said the sexiest word in the English language is cooperation," he says, noting he expects Ruggles and Phillips to put on a good show.

"It's not rocket science," Brunish says with a chuckle. "But it does help if you're a good instinctual actor."

Read it here!**WHAT:** Mt. Hood Repertory Theatre Company's Readers Theater**WHEN:** One Monday a month between October and May**STARTS:** 7 p.m. Monday, Oct. 19, "The Owl and the Pussycat"**WHERE:** Visual Arts Theater, Mt. Hood Community College, 26000 S.E. Stark St., parking lot J**COST:** \$8, season pass is \$45**INFO:** mthoodrep.org, 503-491-5950**Schedule****Oct. 19:** The Owl and the Pussycat**Nov. 16:** Two for the SeesawAccuWeather.com[®]
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