

Centralia College Stages 200th Play

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Actors practice "Who Am I This Time?" at Centralia College. The fall production will mark the college's 200th play.

As his time at the helm of the Centralia College campus theater program wanes, Brian Tyrrell has something to celebrate in his fall production.

"Who Am I This Time? And Other Conundrums of Love", which opens tonight, is the 200th production in the 90-year history of Centralia College and the program. Tyrrell said he is humbled and a little astonished by the milestone.

"When I got here we were on play number 105 and if you had asked me in 1991 if I'd be around for the 200th I'd have said no," Tyrrell said. "But I've been really lucky to have been part of all these productions. It's been a blessing."

Set in the mythical town of North Crawford, Conn., "Who Am I This Time? And Other Conundrums of Love" written by Aaron Posner, weaves together three short stories originally written by Kurt Vonnegut. All of the characters are from the original Vonnegut stories except narrator Tom Newton (played by Isaac Wulff) and his wife Kate Newton (played by Christina Wolf), who were added to create continuity between the three

stories. All three tales are love stories, though they take place in different stages, ages and times in relationships.

"It's a full picture of what a loving relationship is," Page said. "It's the heartache and the butterflies and new love and marriages that have been struggling and saving those things. They're really lovely stories and they're really hopeful."

"It's really sweet but not in a sickly way," Wulff added. "It's just very comforting like a good hot chocolate."

Tyrrell said he saw "Who Am I This Time?" at its premiere three years ago in Portland, and fell in love with it and decided at some point he wanted to bring it to Centralia. He felt this season was the perfect time to do it.

"All the plays this season are wonderfully theatrical and this was the perfect one to lead with," Tyrrell said.

Emily Wills, who plays Catherine, Helene and Paula said she first read the original Vonnegut stories before delving into the play. She said it is the ups and downs and nuances of each of the relationships within the stories that will really hook audiences.

"Everyone who sees this will identify with at least one of the relationships," Wills said. "It will remind them of something in their past or something in their present but they'll be able to see themselves in these characters."

The set will be a stage within a stage in Corbet Theatre. A small riser on the Corbet Theatre stage will be transformed into the Mask and Wig Club theater and surrounded by just 100 seats for each performance. Tyrrell said he chose the setting because he feels Corbet really embodies the feeling of being in a large theater.

The show will be Tyrrell's 95th production in his 24 years with Centralia College. After this, he will direct just two more productions before his retirement. But he was quick to point out that his career follows in some very great footsteps. Prior to Tyrrell, Philip Wickstrom did about 85 shows

in 30 years and prior to that Margaret Corbet directed 11 in 25 years. The remainder of the 200 play credits go to six different college instructors who helped kept the theater program going between Corbet and Wickstrom from 1951-1961.

Like many of the actors and actresses in this production, Matt Osborne (who plays Verne and George) first performed on the Centralia College stage in 1993 under Tyrrell's direction as a student. Now an adult, Osborne said he continues to enjoy working with Tyrrell and being part of the arts at Centralia College. He said Tyrrell's last season is a bittersweet one for him but he will relish in the opportunity to celebrate 200 shows.

"It's so amazing to think there's been 200 shows, really under about three directors," Osborne said. "It really says a lot about (Wickstrom) and (Tyrrell) that they've kept it going all this time."

Wulff said the significance of this show being the 200th in the history of

Centralia College was not lost on the cast members. While they strive for greatness in every production, he said the milestone added a little extra pressure to honor the heritage of the program.

"I feel humbled to be part of it," Wulff said. "I so many other people deserve to be part of the 200th show and I really appreciate the opportunity to work with these people to make this the best show it can be."