

## The Orinda Library Fireside Chat Series Welcomes Actors Reading Writers

By Moya Stone

Lamorinda residents are in for a treat come July 22nd at 7 PM when the Orinda Library hosts Actors Reading Writers and their dramatic reading of Somerset Maugham's short story, *The Fat Women of Antibes*. Written in 1933, this comic tale centers on three widowed and wealthy women visiting a spa on the French Riviera to lose weight. When a fourth woman joins the group to play bridge, conflict and tension ensues over diet, money, and friendship.

Actors Reading Writers is a Berkeley based group of actors who adapt short stories to perform at the Berkeley City Club the first Monday of every month. Founded in 2005 by local thespians Thomas Lynch and Rica Anderson, the group has performed short stories by Dorothy Parker, John Updike, Flannery O'Connor, Truman Capote, and Anton Chekhov, to name just a few.

The Monday readings are free and include two or three stories that fit pensive themes, such as *Unwise Decisions* and *The Intimacy of Strangers*. "We do this because we're trying to share our love of short stories," says Lynch. Word among the Berkeley literati has quickly spread providing ARW with full houses. "We had to quit advertising," says Lynch, who chooses and directs the stories along with Rica Anderson. "We have devoted fans that come every month."

Lynch and Anderson rely on a stable of about eight local actors, most of who belong to the professional actors union, Actors Equity. Berkeley actress Carolyn Cox, who will be reading the character, Lena, in *The Fat Women*, says she enjoys this kind of performing because it allows actors to concentrate on one aspect of acting, rather than having to juggle lines, props, and stage movement. "Readings are like acting made easy," says Cox. "Without memorization and blocking, it frees us up to put more weight on the language." Cox says ARW attracts audiences who listen very carefully to the text. "People do less of that kind of listening today," says Cox. "It's kind of like radio drama from

the old days."

Orinda Library Adult/Teen Services Librarian Ian Richards is pleased to be able to offer this event to the Lamorinda community. "This is a unique opportunity," says Richards. ARW rarely perform outside the Berkeley City Club, but one of the Orinda library staff members is connected to the group and helped arrange for the reading. "We're hoping that this event will attract our regular patrons as well as community members who haven't yet experienced our Fireside Chat series," says Richards.

A regular monthly series, Fireside Chat highlights various local people of interest from actors, to authors, to business professionals. Always held on a Tuesday, Fireside Chat attracts audiences from all around the Lamorinda area. Recent presenters included docents from Berkeley Repertory Theater discussing upcoming shows and lawyer J. Gary Gwilliam who spoke about his memoir and the ethics of law.

Directed by Thomas Lynch and Rica Anderson, *The Fat Women of Antibes* features Carolyn Cox, Betty Grandis, Sandra Schlecter, and Allison Studdiford. The reading is free and starts at 7pm, on July 22, around the fireplace in the Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way. For more information call the Orinda Library at 254-2184.