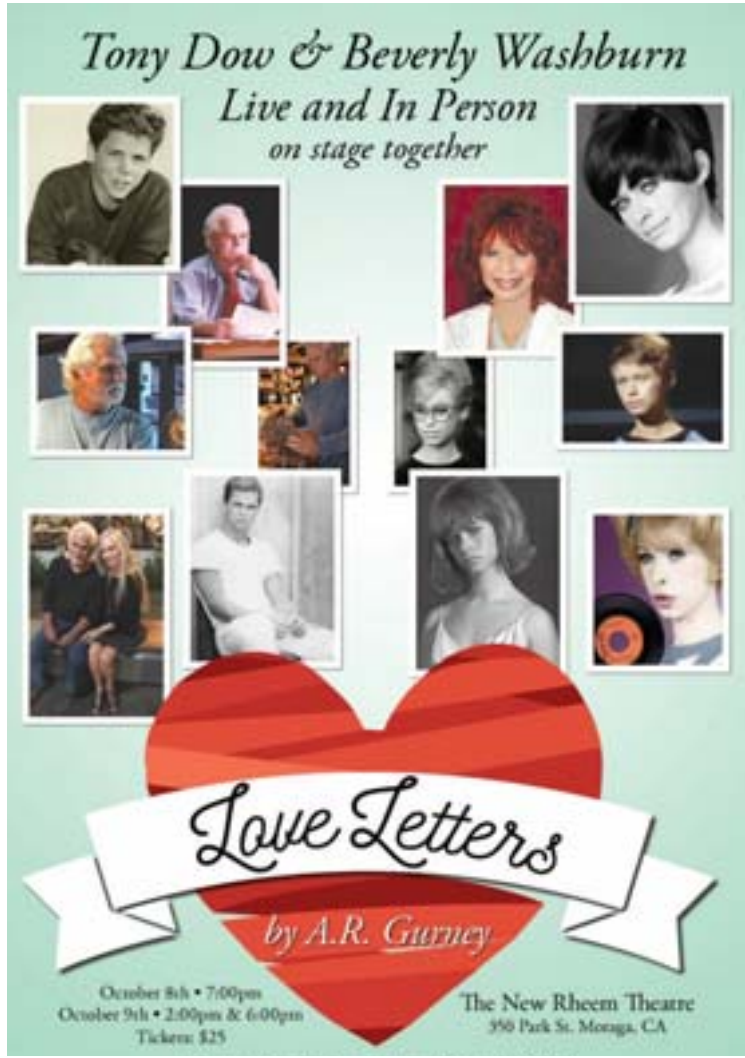


'Love Letters' is From the Heart

Tony Dow, Beverly Washburn in live performance at Rheem Theater

By Diane Claytor



sharing the happy and sad times experienced in lives well lived. The play has become one of theater's biggest successes and some of the country's most famous and well-known actors have taken on the roles Dow and Washburn will perform this weekend.

Dow, who describes the show as "fabulously well written," has performed it several times already and says it's a very emotional play, "able to bring tears as well as make you laugh." Ali MacGraw and Ryan O'Neal have recently been starring in the show; other performers have included Elizabeth Taylor and James Earl Jones, Sigourney Weaver and Jeff Daniels, Carol Burnett, Alan Alda, Martin Sheen, Brian Dennehy and Mia Farrow. Dennehy called "Love Letters" an "extraordinary piece. You cannot stage a play more simply than this, and yet it's about everything in life. First love, loss of opportunities, loss of life, loss of love...it's a beautiful play..."

The idea of staging this show in Moraga is the brainchild of Adam Reeves, a local director and passionate believer of bringing the arts into the community. He and his company, R&R Stage and Screen, completed their first full feature film, "My Brother's Shoes," written and directed by Reeves; it has been picked up by a major studio and is expected to be released next year. Reeves had been working with both Dow and Washburn on another project when Dow, "out of the blue, asked me if I had ever heard of 'Love Letters,'" Reeves said.

"Tony said it was a great play and suggested that he and Beverly perform it. And now, we're hoping that people will come to the Rheem Theater to see this well-known and well-reviewed play and enjoy the opportunity of seeing these celebrities 'up close and personal,'" Reeves continued.

The live show will be performed at 7 p.m. on Sat., Oct. 8 and 2 and 6 p.m. Sun., Oct. 9 at Moraga's Rheem Theater. Tickets are \$25 and may be purchased by going to www.randstageandscreen.com/LoveLetters.

Image and photos provided also enjoyed a longterm friendship and both are equally excited about once again performing together.

"Tony and I go way back," Washburn explained. Meeting on a "Leave it to Beaver" episode, Washburn acknowledged that, "like every other teenage girl in America at the time, I had a major crush on 'Wally.'" Dow admitted that he also liked Washburn from the beginning, but "was too shy to actually ask her out." They did go on a few studio-arranged dates and have remained good friends ever since.

Longtime Careers in Showbiz

Dow starred in 234 episodes of the iconic situation comedy "Leave it to Beaver" from 1957-1963; one reviewer called his "Wally" the "older brother we all wish we had." In 1984, Dow reprised his role as Wally, only this time as an adult with his own family, in "The New Leave it to Beaver," which had a five-year run. Over the years, Dow has made guest appearances in numerous TV shows, done visual effects work for several movies, and enjoyed a 20-year directing career. He still occasionally performs in theater productions and is a successful sculptor, having had two pieces exhibited in the Louvre in Paris.

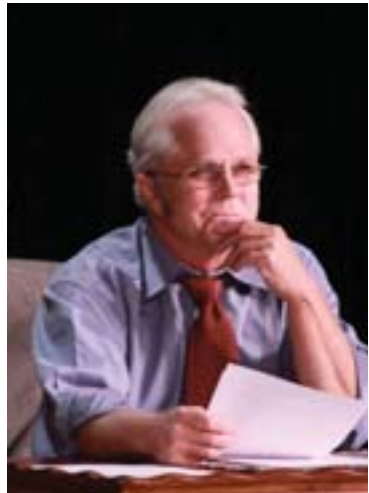
Over her long career, Washburn has been seen in numerous movies and TV shows, including Cecil B. DeMille's "The Greatest Show on Earth," "Here Comes the Groom," "The Lone Ranger," "Father Knows Best," "The Streets of San Francisco," "Star Trek," and as a series regular on "The New Loretta Young Show." She also had a hit record in the 1960s and has authored two books.

Simple Love

Called "deceptively simple" by The Hollywood Reporter, "Love Letters" was written in 1988 by A.R. Gurney and was a Pulitzer Prize for Drama finalist. The characters, Ladd and Gardner, are childhood friends whose life-long correspondence begins with a child's birthday thank you note and continues for the next 50 years,



Beverly Washburn



Tony Dow

As a young man, he played Wally Cleaver, older brother to "the Beav" on the hit TV show, "Leave it to Beaver." As a much more mature, white-haired man, Tony Dow is now playing conservative Andrew Makepeace Ladd, III, in a live production of "Love Letters," coming to Moraga's Rheem Theater Oct. 8 and 9.

He is joined by Beverly Washburn, who, as a child, was featured in Disney's classic film, "Old Yeller," the emotional story of a beloved dog. In "Love Letters," she plays the spontaneous Melissa Gardner.

"Love Letters" is a two-person play about a 50-year relationship between a man and a woman, told through the letters and cards they wrote each other over the years sharing their hopes, dreams, victories and defeats. As life often imitates art, Dow and Washburn have

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