

~ Life in LAMORINDA ~

An 'Ideal' Mix of Wit and Deceit at Town Hall Theatre

By Kara Navolio



Heather Kellogg, DC Scarpelli and Dana Lewenthal in "An Ideal Husband" by Oscar Wilde, June 1-June 24 at Town Hall Theatre in Lafayette. Photo Stu Selland

Political corruption, hypocrisy, secrets, and witty humor blend perfectly in Lafayette Town Hall Theatre's production of Oscar Wilde's "An Ideal Husband," running June 3-24, with previews June 1 and 2.

Although the play is set in 1895 London, the themes could not be more relevant today. Director Susan Hovey states, "The topic is timeless. There is political intrigue and scandal, but the show does not

hit you over the head with it. It's scathingly witty and thoroughly entertaining at the same time. I've always been a fan of Wilde's pithy epigrams."

Wilde's most famous play is "The Importance of Being Earnest." However "An Ideal Husband" was chosen by Artistic Director Susan Evans for its social commentary which still seems so modern and its grit. Evans added, "Director Susan Hovey has added

a modern element to the show by using contemporary music between the scenes as a nod to the very modern message from a play written in the late Victorian period."

The show, which premiered in 1895 and was revived many times, most notably on Broadway in 1996 and locally at CalShakes in 2008, poses the question: Is it possible to have an ideal husband? While scan-

dal unfolds, each character learns that we all have flaws and secrets. In the end what really matters is love.

The show features well-known local performers: Dennis Markham as Sir Robert Chiltern, Heather Kellogg as Lady Chiltern, DC Scarpelli as Lord Goring, Dana Lewenthal as Mrs. Cheveley, and Amanda Leigh as Mabel Chiltern. The design team has created an authentic turn-of-the-century set and costumes.

Several special events are planned for the show's run. On June 3, "A Wilde Opening Night"

celebration will take place. June 11 audience members are encouraged to wear costumes and come for "A Wilde Tea Party" following the show. On June 17, literary consultant Katie Zeigler has lined up local authors to discuss the topic of "sin" at "A Wilde Salon Night" before the evening performance (costumes encouraged). All special events will feature small culinary bites by Réve Bistro. In addition, on June 9 and 23 there will be post-show Talk-Balk with the actors.

Tickets and more information are available at www.townhalltheatre.com or (925) 283-1557.

Award-winning author Fowler to speak at unique writing conference at SMC



Karen Joy Fowler Photo provided

The MFA Creative Writing Program at Saint Mary's College and Hedgebrook, the prestigious women's writing retreat and non-profit, announce Bridging: A One-Day Hedgebrook Writing Retreat for writers who identify as women, on Saturday, June 10 at Saint Mary's College.

The second annual retreat is rooted in the student-centered immersive writing approach of Hedgebrook and will feature a keynote address by award-winning writer Karen Joy Fowler.

The keynote address by Fowler is also free and open to the public.

The author of seven novels and three short story collections, Fowler's most recent novel "We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves" was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize and was the winner of the 2014 PEN/Faulkner Award and the California Book Award for Fiction. Her book, "The Jane Austen Book Club," spent 13 weeks on The New York Times bestseller list and was a New York Times Notable Book.

Hedgebrook is a 28-year-old nonprofit dedicated to supporting women and non-binary writers across a broad spectrum, including age, citizenship status, current place of residence, nationality, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and economic resources and professional experience. More than 50 percent of Hedgebrook's alumnae are women of color, and come from all over the world and all walks of life.

"Hedgebrook is thrilled to bring the radical hospitality we practice at our retreat on Whidbey Island in Washington to SMC's extraordinary MFA program and writing commu-

nity," said Hedgebrook Executive Director Amy Wheeler "There is such good synergy in our shared vision to create space for women to come together, in solitude and community, to write, think, engage in big ideas and work together in the movement for equal voice in the cultural conversation for women."

Saint Mary's MFA Creative Writing Program Manager Sara Mumolo said the Bridging retreat reflects a mission match between Hedgebrook and the graduate program. "We felt a deep connection between Hedgebrook's philosophy of putting radical kindness first and women writing for change within our own social justice tradition, which is unique to our MFA program."

During the retreat, attendees can participate in workshop sessions on developing artist statements and press kits; exploring story, plot, and character development, and flash nonfiction; and gain important insights into applying for writing residencies. Participants work with celebrated authors and receive important feedback on their work from other Bay Area women writers and Hedgebrook alumnae, who include Saint Mary's MFA Creative Writing Program faculty and graduates.

The event will take place from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. in the Hagerty Lounge at De La Salle Hall. Fowler's keynote address will be held at 7:30 p.m. in the Soda Center on the campus.

Cost for the day's program is \$130 and includes choice of one of four writing workshops, happy hour reception (non-alcoholic options available), three meals with evening cake and coffee (vegan and gluten-free options available), and networking opportunities with Bay Area women writers groups. Limited partial scholarships are available.

For more details about the Bridging: A One-Day Hedgebrook Writing Retreat collaboration between Hedgebrook and the Saint Mary's MFA Creative Writing Program, contact Bridging coordinator Joanne Furio at 415-686-8695 or by email at jf14@stmarys-ca.edu. Learn more about the retreat online at stmarys-ca.edu/hedgebrookretreat. — Peggy Spear

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