

“Working” to be Kickoff Production in RCC’s New Theater

“So what do you do?”

“What’s your job?”

So often, these are the questions we ask when meeting someone new. Our jobs define much of who we are, yet rarely do we get more than a glimpse of what an individual does for a living or how they really feel about it. But in an upcoming musical theater production at Rogue Community College, audiences will feel the pride, aspirations, and insecurities of the American worker.

RCC’s Theatre and Music Department has selected the Tony-nominated musical “Working” as the inaugural production for its new theatre space on the Medford campus. With a cast of 31 community members and students, the musical will open Friday, May 11 in the new RCC Performing Arts Hall at 130 E. 8th Street in downtown Medford. The show will run through May 27, with performances on Fridays and Saturdays at 8 pm and Sundays at 2 pm.

The musical is based on Studs Terkel’s 1974 book, Working: People Talk about What They Do All Day and How They Feel about What They Do. The Chicago journalist and radio talkshow host recorded interviews with 130 different American workers, transcripts and tapes of which reside in the Chicago History Museum. The musical version, based on a subset of those interviews, has 26 characters including a waitress, a corporate executive, a mason, a housewife, an ironworker, a school teacher, a firefighter and a UPS driver. The characters come from different regions. Some are quite happy with their chosen occupations while others question what could have been, had their choices and circumstances differed.

“Basically the musical took Terkel’s interviews and set them to song and drew from a musical palette of pop, blues, folk and other musical forms,” says the show’s producing director, John Cole. “All these workers express insecurities, dreams deferred, and a search beyond job titles. What really makes this a compelling show is its realistic portrayals of American workers.”

The music and book for the show are by Stephen Schwartz (Godspell, Wicked, Pippin) and Nina Faso. To represent the diversity of people depicted, Schwartz and Faso recruited a wide variety of songwriters and lyricists for the show, including James Taylor, Micki Grant, Craig Carnelia, as well as Lin Manuel Miranda, Susan Birkenhead, Matt Landers and Graciela Daniele.

“Working” is directed by Ron Danko with musical direction by Chris Williams and choreography by Sandy Contreras. The cast includes more than 30 people from Jackson and Josephine Counties, including two residents of the Applegate—Catherine Hansen and Russ Mitchell.

“In this time when so many people need and want to work, while others seek more meaning in their work, this show offers hope and inspiration,” says Danko. “Its strength is in the core truths that transcend specific professions. People’s relationships to their work ultimately reveal key aspects of their humanity, regardless of the trappings of the job itself—timeless truths.

“I think ‘Working’ has the power to rejuvenate your appreciation of your own job,” he adds.

Tickets for “Working” are \$12 for general admission and \$10 for students. For reservations call 541-245-7585 or e-mail boxoffice@rogucecc.edu.



“I’m not just a waitress—I’m a one-woman show!” Delores Dante (Sarah Maple) explains to the UPS man (David Sours) why there’s no work so trying—yet so satisfying—as being a waitress. The scene is from the musical “Working,” opening May 11 and playing for three weekends at Rogue Community College. The musical is based on Studs Terkel’s ground-breaking book about the everyday exertions of ordinary Americans. Tickets for “Working” are \$12 for general admission and \$10 for students. To reserve tickets, call or email the box office. Box Office: [541.245.7585](tel:541.245.7585) (leave a message). Email: boxoffice@rogucecc.edu.