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### **New adaptation breathes life into classic drama**

Creative Writing Professor Bryan Wade sets Ibsen's classic in a small town off the coast of British Columbia in 1968. Thought to be one of the few modernized adaptations of *The Lady from the Sea*, Prof. Wade says the changes make the play more accessible to contemporary audiences.

*The Lady from the Sea*

By Henrik Ibsen

Adapted by Bryan Wade

At the Telus Studio Theatre in the Chan Centre for the Performing Arts

Until March 27

BY KELSEY DUNDON



A new stage adaptation brings to life Ibsen's classic, *The Lady from the Sea*. Mike Waterman (back), stars as Edmund Freeman, Joel Redmond is Dr. Seton and Robin Mooney is Ellida Seton. (Tim Matheson Photo)

Mar 22, 2004 | A dangerously exciting sailor or a boringly wholesome doctor — it's the choice that Ellida faces in Henrik Ibsen's classic *The Lady from the Sea*, now staged at the Telus Studio Theatre in the Chan Centre for the Performing Arts.

But there's a twist — Creative Writing Professor Bryan Wade has taken the original late nineteenth century Norwegian drama, modernized it, and transplanted it into a small town off the coast of British Columbia.

"I didn't want to do a straight adaptation because the ones I've looked at have been locked into the turn of the century," says Prof. Wade. "That's one reason why *The Lady from the Sea* is not done as often as the other [Ibsen] plays — I think it's hard for people to identify with."

Ibsen wrote the play, which runs till March 27 with nightly performances at 7:30 pm, in 1888 when he was fusing powerful psychological insights with a commitment to female equality.

Prof. Wade has set this latest adaptation in the summer of 1968 in an isolated unnamed town on the central BC Coast; he believes his new adaptation makes the play more accessible to modern audiences.

"The play has a lot of appeal for people today," he says.

The Lady from the Sea's subject matter — freedom of choice, the maintenance of healthy relationships and other issues young adults face — leant itself well to modernization, according to Prof. Wade.

John Cooper, a freelance director who recently worked with Theatre at UBC on A Street Car Named Desire, believes the play works well in a modern, local setting because of the universal issues it addresses.

"That's what makes this great literature," says Cooper. "It's got universal questions that supercede the specifics."

In addition to gender issues, the play reflects on the nature of free will and choice, and the guts it takes to make a potentially life-altering decision.

"It's a great idea — you need to be free to make the choice, you have to be totally free to do it, you have to be willing to do what you have to do to *be* free to make that choice, " says Cooper.

"When you get that choice — do you know what to do with it?"

Cooper says considering this question in a theoretical situation is quite different from watching an actor portray it on stage. His goal as a storyteller is to make the audience emotionally involved with the characters so these questions become more relevant.

"[Audiences] have an emotional imperative to go through the questioning, that to me is one of the beauties of theatre art," says Cooper.

"It takes a question that could just be intellectual and provides an emotional imperative for judging the questions involved, or reflecting on the themes involved."

This well-received production ends the 2003-2004 Theatre at UBC season.

The cast includes UBC students Robin Mooney, Joel Redmond, Sarah Brown, Anastasia Filipczuk, Kerry Allchin, Tory Coombs, Johannah Khalema and Mike Waterman. Professor Ronald Fedoruk, who is also director of the Foundations program in the Faculty of Arts, is responsible for set and lighting design, MFA candidate Stephanie Carter designed the play's costumes and BFA candidate Daryl Ritchot is behind sound design.

The Lady from the Sea is produced by the Department of Theatre, Film and Creative Writing in the Faculty of Arts.

Tickets are available at the Frederic Wood box office, or by calling 604.822.2678.

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