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events

Onstage and off, 'Shadowlands' celebrates love

By STACY NICK
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Sometimes life imitates art.

In 1994 Jonathan Farwell met Deb Note while playing one of the most famous couples of the 20th century — writer C.S. Lewis and poet Joy Gresham.

A few days into dress rehearsals the two were in love and a year later they married on stage following a Sunday matinee performance of the same play that brought them together.

Ten years later Jonathan Farwell and Deb Note Farwell are resurrecting their roles and bringing "Shadowlands" to the Bas Bleu Theatre.

And following the Nov. 20 matinee the couple will renew their vows in a ceremony led by longtime friend and Bas Bleu artistic director Wendy Ishii.

"It is kind of like a fairy tale," Note Farwell said.

"Shadowlands" is the



Peter Heacox/For the Coloradoan

Jonathan Farwell, right, and Deb Note Farwell rehearse a scene from 'Shadowlands' at Bas Bleu Theatre.

'Shawowlands'

When: 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturdays through Jan. 7 with additional shows at 7:30 p.m. Nov. 17, Dec. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 and Jan. 5 and 2:30 p.m. Nov. 20, 27, Dec. 4, 11 and 18 (no shows Dec. 24 or 31)

Where: Bas Bleu Theatre, 401 Pine St.

Cost: adults \$19, seniors 65 and older \$15, students \$10; Opening night is \$30 and the first Thursday night and first Sunday matinee are two-for-one tickets

Information and tickets: www.basbleu.org or 988-8949, 7:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 2 p.m. Wednesday

Where: Lincoln Center, 417 W. Magnolia St.

Cost: \$26 for center seats and \$24 for side seats

Information and tickets: www.lctix.com or 221-6730

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biographical re-telling of the friendship-turned-romance between Lewis and Gresham.

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Gresham, an outspoken American divorcee, could not have been more opposite from the soft spoken Lewis, a Christian apologist, Farwell said. Despite their personality and religious differences, their love overcame all obstacles.

Note Farwell said one of the reasons this is a favorite role for her is the parallels she finds between her marriage and theirs.

"There was such an immediate bonding and respect that I felt from (Jonathan) for me," she said. "I always felt like we were totally equals in his eyes and that he valued me as a friend and then as a best friend and then as a life partner. That is what Joy and C.S. shared. I get the feeling he really respected her for who she was."

Her third portrayal of Joy also allows her to incorporate some of her own life lessons into the character.

When she first took on the role, Note Farwell was a "dyed-in-the-wool" Catholic, but over the years she has been learning more about other religions and reading about spirituality.

"Now I can bring that to Joy," she said.

And while the story behind the story is firmly rooted in reality, the set is straight out of Narnia.

Designer Michael Gorgan, who also does set design for the Central City Opera, eschewed the realistic set most productions have used and built a set that Lewis himself might have dreamt up.

The big challenge was to make all 26 scene changes happen without making it clunky, said Ishii, who is co-directing with Farwell.

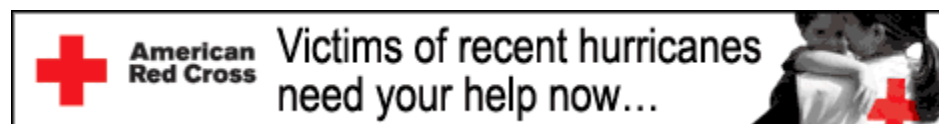
Gorgan created a turntable wall that shifts allowing scenes to change fluidly.

While initially hesitant to tackle such a large production, Ishii said the set coupled with the storyline made it a perfect production for the holiday season.

"(It) gives you a vehicle to reflect on what is the nature of love and the nature of faith and relationships," she said. "Although it has moments of sadness, it's ultimately a very affirming, positive and warm show. It gives people the opportunity to consider what is most important to them. Not in a didactic way, but in a human way."

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