

Dragon Theatre: Late Nights and Cutting-Edge Drama

By **Bay Area Theater Examiner**, Amy Marie Boulanger

August 19, 9:18 AM

[Meredith Hagedorn](#) speaks over the phone while en route to a meeting. She is a busy woman, Executive Director of the [Dragon Productions Theatre Company](#) in Palo Alto. Born of an idea to bring cutting-edge theater to the Bay Area, Dragon Theatre's roots stem from true nomadic form. Founded in 1999, the theater's early days were a series of "dumpster diving," as Hagedorn recalls Dragon's beginnings.

"Costumes and props were living in my car," she says. Though the gypsy-style theater life may have had a certain appeal, says Hagedorn, "I knew I wanted to go bigger."

From its traveling roots, the theater eventually found its own home. Today, Dragon Productions Theatre Company dwells in downtown Palo Alto, near a hub of restaurants and night-life attractions. The 2,500-square foot theater space is home to seasons of quality professional theater.

Recently closing the highly successful "" by [Cynthia Heimerl](#) – what Hagedorn calls "Sex and the City for the stage" – Dragon's next project, set to open this Friday, August 21st, is "The Memory of Water," in which Hagedorn will also appear.

The play, by [Shelagh Stephenson](#), focuses on a trio of daughters coping with the loss of their mother, and will run through September 13th on Dragon's main stage.

The smaller back studio houses acting classes, as well as a story time series for children, a program that aims to promote the interactive world of the theater. Inspired by story book library readings, the Dragon series pushes beyond the text, infusing physicality in the pieces to spark children's creativity.

In addition to the classes and on-going productions, Dragon Theatre hosts the popular Saturday night *After Hours*, samplings of improv, music and theater. Acoustic, grunge rock and soulful Rhythm and Blues artists attract a younger, different crowd, widening the scope of the audience. All around, everyone involved gets something out of these events. Contributing to their own marketing, the bands and artists bring in more audiences and gain more exposure for themselves as well as for the theater.

Wanting to do a late-night project for a long

time, Hagedorn struggled with the idea of protecting the theater space – which is in a continual flux of set pieces for the current show – to keeping the facility as busy as possible. The solution: evenings of improv and music.

To preserve the integrity of the sets, emcees host the *After Hours* events, re-arranging and setting back the various set pieces so they will be in place for Sunday matinees. Launched in February of 2009, there has been a demand to keep the series running, which will continue to showcase artists in the area.



Featured, from top to bottom, *Memory of Water* cast, Laura Jane Bailey, Meredith Hagedorn, and Janine Evans. Photo credit: James Kasyan.

With a growing Board of Directors, a surge of new ideas flowing, and a home to house its innovative plays, classes and educational outreach programs, Dragon has come a long way from its early itinerant days. Whether you're looking for a night out, or are interested in a performance opportunity in an intimate venue, Dragon Theatre offers something for everyone.



Dragon Theatre

535 Alma St.

Palo Alto, CA 94301 www.dragonproductions.net/contact-us/directions.html

Audible Clique, Improv Group; Photo Credit:
Zaz Mulemwa

After Hours Series

Saturdays: 11:30p.m. -1:30a.m.

Upcoming Events:

Aug. 22 Kevin Hull and Megan Johnson with
The Hatnappers, Acoustic folk/Americana

Aug. 29 BAD DECISION DINOSAUR (formerly
NOISIA)

Sept. 5 Audible Clique – Comedy group

Sept. 12 Tyrone Woodrow – R&B soloist

Tickets:

\$7. No advanced reservations; walk-ins only.

For more information:

info@dragonproductions.net

Aug. 21st – Sept. 13th

Thursday – Saturdays 8p.m.

Sundays 2p.m.

Pay-What-You-Can Preview: Thursday, Aug.
20th

*Talk-Back with Director and Cast, Sunday,
Sept. 6th

For Ticket Info: 1-800-838-3006 or to
purchase tickets online [www.
dragonproductions.net/tickets.htm](http://www.dragonproductions.net/tickets.htm)



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