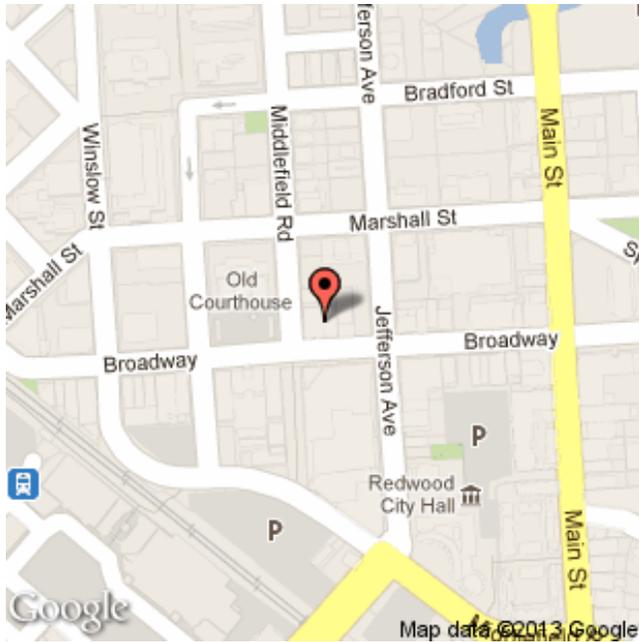


Dragon Theatre fired up over Redwood City move



Meredith Hagedorn

Dragons have always been special to Meredith Hagedorn, representing things that are rare, interesting and magical.

So when she thought about the type of theater company she wanted to create, Hagedorn didn't have to look far for a name and logo.

On Friday night, the Dragon Productions Theatre Company will unveil both in its new downtown Redwood City home with a grand opening celebration and debut of satirical play "After Ashley." Hagedorn's dream theater has existed for 13 years, mainly in Palo Alto after a nomadic first season, but the company and its executive artistic director now call Redwood City home.

The new location at 2120 Broadway nearly doubles the previous capacity with 75 seats and space for classes, rehearsals and rentals. The site is also smack dab in the middle of Redwood City's downtown arts scene at the intersection with Theatre Way, right across from the Century 20 movie theater and kitty-corner from the Fox Theatre which itself offers a wide variety of entertainment and Broadway By the Bay shows.

Broadway By the Way, in particular, offers a great synergy because the two theaters offer such different types of shows, she said. In contrast to the big Broadway shows down the street, Dragon Theatre favors off-the-beaten path works like the lesser-known play "November" by David Mamet.

Yet the proximity to the Fox and movie theater mean Dragon may draw new fans who walk by the glass facade — a benefit it didn't have at its side street Palo Alto location

"This location was really just perfect in so many ways," Hagedorn said.

Hagedorn actually looked at the building in 2010 when downtown Redwood City had more vacancies. Fast forward to when the company really had outgrown its Palo Alto building and Hagedorn was surprised to find the site still available while everything around it filled up.

"The fates were smiling on us," she said.

But the company had work to do before the curtain could rise and launched a \$400,000 fundraising campaign to cover the relocation, architects and permits. Donations have hit \$320,000 which Hagedorn concedes is not too shabby but she said the company really needs to span the difference. Hagedorn said the company is grateful not only for support through donations but also by bodies in the 75 seats.

"People have asked if we can fill that many and I say I don't know because we never have before. It will be an interesting challenge for us, ramping up and introducing our work to a whole new community," Hagedorn said.

Dragon will stage seven productions in the 2013 season and may also offer late-night entertainment like music and comedy in the future. Following "After Ashley," the second show is the play "Les liaisons dangereuses."

Info box: Dragon Theatre is at 2120 Broadway, Redwood City and can be reached at 493-2006 ext. 4. To purchase show tickets online visit www.dragonproductions.net. The grand opening includes a ribbon-cutting ceremony with Redwood City Mayor Alicia Aguirre at 5:30 p.m. followed by free tours of the facility until 7 p.m. Friday, Jan. 25.

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