

ANPF

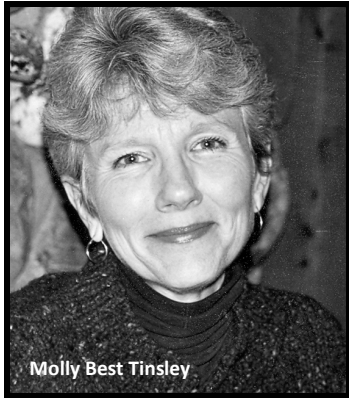
ASHLAND NEW PLAYS FESTIVAL

VOL. 3 NO. 1

SPRING 2011

Coming in June

ANPF Presents Molly Tinsley's *The Limits of Bliss*



Molly Best Tinsley

ANPF is delighted to present a reading of local playwright Molly Best Tinsley's *The Limits of Bliss*. The reading will be held Sunday, June 12, at 7 p.m. in an intimate space at Paschal Winery, where seating is limited (see sidebar). The production is directed by ANPF Artistic Director Douglas Rowe and features the acting talents of Sophia Palosaari, Dawnn Pavlonnis, Colleen Pyke, and Roanne Lewis.

In *The Limits of Bliss*, Carly (played by Palosaari) wants to have a child. No one else is interested until the baby is born, whereupon her mother, Liz (Pyke), sets aside their estrangement to help; her sperm donor, Arthur (Rowe), is suddenly obsessed with fatherhood; and her ex-partner won't leave her alone. Carly decides to throw a dinner party designed to *show them all*. She shows herself instead.

"I wrote *The Limits of Bliss* after completing *Glacial Genes*," says Tinsley. "I guess I wasn't finished with the possibilities for sperm banks and donor insemination—and the revised notions of family that they bring about." *Glacial Genes*, staged in November 2008 at Oregon Stage Works (OSW) and directed by Peter Alzado, wove a tale of a stressed-out sperm bank owner, a pregnant virgin, global warming, and hope. *Glacial Genes* was recently a finalist for the Oregon Book Award's Angus Bowmer Award in Drama. *The Limits of Bliss* had a staged reading in Vancouver, WA, by Arts Equity in December 2007.

"I've had lots of shorter plays read publicly in Ashland as part of the Playwrights' Unit of the now defunct Oregon Stage Works," says Tinsley. "We still meet and critique each other's work. I had work read by Ashland Contemporary Theatre's Quarter Moon series. I attended every evening performance of *Glacial Genes* (I don't do matinées), and it was like watching my daughters race on swim teams. Every muscle was pulling for the actors.

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The Limits of Bliss

Sunday, June 12, 7 p.m.

Paschal Winery

1122 Suncrest Road, Talent

Tickets are \$15

Reservations are required

Call (541) 488-7995 or e-mail tickets@AshlandNewPlays.org

Reservations are made in the order received.



Aurelia Grierson performs as Mama in AHS's 2011 production of *Chicago*



AHS Senior Aurelia Grierson Wins ANPF Scholarship

Ashland High School graduating senior Aurelia Grierson, 18, is the winner of ANPF's \$500 writing- and performance-based scholarship.

Interested students wrote and performed an original two- to three-minute theatrical monologue on a topic of their choice before a panel of judges comprising ANPF Artistic Director Doug Rowe, veteran OSF actor Michael J. Hume, and ANPF Advisory Board member Peter Alzado. Grierson impressed the judges with her original monologue "College Auditions."

Coincidentally—and unbeknownst to the judges—Grierson was one of the actors in ANPF's 2009 fundraiser *ANPF Student Spotlight*, which was staged at Oregon Shakespeare Festival's Carpenter Hall.

Grierson will attend Marymount Manhattan College in New York City and major in theatre.

Coming in August

A Walk in the Woods with Farrell and Rowe

Ashland New Plays Festival is bringing Mike Farrell of *M*A*S*H* fame northward from Los Angeles to join Doug Rowe onstage at Ashland High School's Mountain Avenue Theatre for a reading of Lee Blessing's 1988 play *A Walk in the Woods* on Saturday, August 13, at 7:30 p.m.

A Walk in the Woods is the story of an impossible friendship, one that grows between an earnest young American arms negotiator and his more cynical Soviet counterpart during their private walks together over a period of many months on the outskirts of Geneva, Switzerland. It is also the story of two nations attempting to avert a nuclear holocaust in spite of the political and economic forces that seem to be pushing them relentlessly toward it. The play was nominated for both a Tony Award and a Pulitzer Prize.

Tickets are available July 1 at ShowTix4U.com, by e-mailing tickets@AshlandNewPlays.org, or by calling (541) 488-7995. Price is \$25 for premium seats and \$20 for general admission. For updates visit AshlandNewPlays.org.



Last November 46 eager volunteers met to begin the process of analyzing the scripts submitted for ANPF 2011. Those who stepped up to participate were primarily retirees—engineers, teachers, professors, journalists, playwrights, scientists, and actors. Others had full-time jobs—technicians, physical therapists, businesspeople, and theatre professionals. The group represented a multitude of backgrounds and interests, but the one thing they had in common was their love of theatre.

The 204 hopeful playwrights from 31 states as well as Britain, the Czech Republic, and the province of

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Front Rowe Center

By Douglas Rowe
Artistic Director

I was recently invited to Laguna Beach, California, to participate in a celebration commemorating the ninetieth anniversary of its theater – the oldest continuously operating theater on the West Coast. I was personally involved for 30 of those years when it was a community theater. The actors were doctors, lawyers, teachers, bartenders, and cartoonists of all ages. Many of the set designers were local architects, and many of the stage managers were housewives. We often used professionals in each category to lead the way.

ANPF functions in a similar manner. Some of our actors and directors are graciously provided by the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, but the bulk of the work rests with community members, our Board of Directors, and our readers, who each year sift

through more than 200 plays from across the country and sometimes the world. Four of those plays, after much evaluation and discussion, are ultimately selected, and their authors are brought to Ashland for our October festival.

This summer includes some exciting bonuses. ANPF will proudly present one of our local playwrights, Molly Best Tinsley, whose work I have admired for years. *The Limits of Bliss*, a two-act play, will be read at the Paschal Winery on June 12. On August 13 an old pal from my community theater days in Laguna Beach will do a reading with me of *A Walk in the Woods* by Lee Blessing at the Mountain Avenue Theater. More than likely you will remember him from a television series: Mike Farrell, alias B. J. Hunnicutt of *M*A*S*H*. I hope you'll join us!

Molly Best Tinsley's *The Limits of Bliss*

continued from front page

Twenty years ago, in an episode of sanity, Tinsley decided that 20 years of teaching literature and creative writing at the US Naval Academy was enough. She resigned from the faculty, moved west, and now writes full-time in Ashland and Portland. She's the recipient of two National Endowment of the Arts fellowships in fiction and has published a novel, *My Life with Darwin*, and a story collection, *Throwing Knives*, which won the Oregon Book Award in 2001. One reviewer called her latest novel, *Satan's Chamber*, co-authored with Karetta Hubbard, the "first feminist spy thriller." (It's available at Bloomsbury's and on Amazon.com.)

Her full-length *Fission* was named runner-up for Seattle's Best New Play in 2005 by *The Seattle Times*. Her dramatic work has been a finalist for the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Conference and the Heideman Award, among other prizes, and she's a survivor of last summer's Kennedy Center Playwriting Intensive.

"I'm a late convert to playwriting," says Tinsley. "After the Source Theatre in Washington, DC, produced my first stab at a one-act as part of its summer festival, the collaborative experience began to haunt me like *Paradise Lost*. Eventually, I resigned my day job on the civilian English faculty at the Naval Academy and fled the eastern megalopolis for this theatre town and a self-administered apprenticeship in play-making."



Reading Committee Update *continued from front page*

Quebec, Canada, will wait a few more weeks to learn if they are among the winners of this nationally recognized festival. To ensure that the plays were judged with no biases, the names and the backgrounds of the playwrights were not revealed to the readers.

The first step was a series of training sessions to prepare the readers for the task that lay ahead. Lue Douthit, director of literary development and dramaturgy at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, led the first of the workshops; that was followed by a seminar with Dale Luciano, emeritus professor of directing and dramatic literature at Southern Oregon University. The third and final training session was taught by John Stadelman, a well-known local actor and director, along with OSF dramaturg Judith Rosen.

Their training completed, the readers were separated into five groups, and the scripts were divided equally among them. The groups met frequently during this first round to discuss elements of playwriting and the specific plays assigned to them. Every play was read and scored by three readers; and when the first round ended nearly four months later, 170 scripts had been eliminated from the competition.

When the second round began during the last week of February, readers were geared up to scrutinize the 34 highest-scoring plays. All the readers studied all the final scripts and met three times in their groups to discuss the merits of each. All the scores have been submitted, and now the excitement builds as the numbers are tabulated.

The six scripts receiving the highest scores will be handed over to ANPF Artistic Director Doug Rowe. In late May all of the readers will meet to discuss, deliberate, and recommend an additional four to six scripts. From the 10 to 12 plays presented to him, Rowe will choose the four to be performed as dramatic readings at ANPF 2011, which runs October 19 through 23.

"The experience has been both gratifying and fun," said group leader Norma Wright. "Our procedure for play selection and the opportunities we offer winning playwrights are unique to any new plays festival in the United States. We are enormously proud of this jewel in the theatre crown of Ashland and particularly of the volunteers who take the time and the effort to acknowledge talented playwrights and promising new works to present to our Ashland audiences."

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one of the premier new plays festivals in the country

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Spotlight on Mike Farrell

Best known for his eight years on *M*A*S*H* and five seasons on *Providence*, Mike Farrell is also a writer, director, producer, and social activist. What brings this Hollywood insider to Ashland? Turns out, Farrell and Doug Rowe are longtime friends.

"I've known Doug for more years than seem possible," says Farrell. "We've worked together, played together, lived together, and have been fast friends ever since I wondered who the young punk who walked into the Laguna Playhouse and took over for the director we'd been working with thought he was."

That "young punk" was ANPF's current artistic director, who stayed with the Laguna Playhouse for 30 years after that chance meeting that grew into a lifelong friendship.

"Turned out," says Farrell, "he was the most talented director I'd ever worked with and one of the best guys I've ever known."

Farrell went on to fulfill many roles in both the arts and social activism, yet he and Doug stayed in close touch and are excited to be reunited on an Ashland stage later this summer for *A Walk in the Woods*.

Some of Farrell's notable early roles included starring with Brod Crawford in *The Interns* and with Anthony Quinn in *The Man and the City*. In 1975 he joined the cast of *M*A*S*H* in the role of B. J. Hunnicutt. He stayed with the hit series for its final eight years on the air. In 1985 he partnered with film and television producer Marvin Minoff to create Farrell/Minoff Productions, which, among other projects, made the Robin Williams vehicle *Patch Adams*, based on Farrell's own acquaintance with the doctor.

Farrell has done two one-man shows: *JFK*, a *One Man Show* for PBS and, onstage, a national tour of David W. Rintels's play *Clarence Darrow*. He also hosted several *National Geographic Presents* specials and starred in a number of TV movies, including *Memorial Day* (which he co-produced), *Sex and the Single Parent*, *Prime Suspect*, *Choices of the Heart*, *The Whereabouts of Jenny*, and *Silent Motive*. In 1983 he starred in the movie *Memorial Day*. Later TV appearances include roles on *Desperate Housewives* and *Law & Order: SVU*.

Farrell served as first vice president of the Screen Actors Guild for three years and is a member of the Guild's national board of directors.

Beyond his work in the entertainment industry, Farrell has traveled the world for the past 30 years as part of prominent international human rights and peace delegations. Destinations included El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, the USSR, Paraguay, Chile, Israel, the Occupied Territories, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Czechoslovakia, Somalia, Kenya, Croatia, Bosnia, Cuba, Rwanda, Zaire, Tanzania, Mexico, and Costa Rica.

This work led to his helping establish the Southern California Committee of Human Rights Watch, where he served for 10 years as co-chair.

A social justice advocate, Farrell served for three years as a member of the State of California's Commission on Judicial Performance.

His opposition to the war in Iraq resulted in his co-founding Artists United to Win Without War.

A lifelong opponent of the death penalty, Mike has "seen too many death rows." As president of the board of Death Penalty Focus since 1994, he speaks, debates, writes extensively, and engages in campaigns across the country in opposition to state killing. He is currently involved in an international effort in support of a worldwide moratorium on the death penalty.

He is the author of two books, *Just Call Me Mike: A Journey to Actor and Activist* and *Of Mule and Man*.

ANPF is thrilled to have Farrell in our midst this summer for our August 13 reading of *A Walk in the Woods* at the Mountain Avenue Theatre.

"Working with Doug, who has forgotten more about the theater than I can ever hope to know, is always a treat," says Farrell, "so I'm looking forward to *A Walk in the Woods*."

A Walk in the Woods

Saturday, August 13

7:30 p.m.

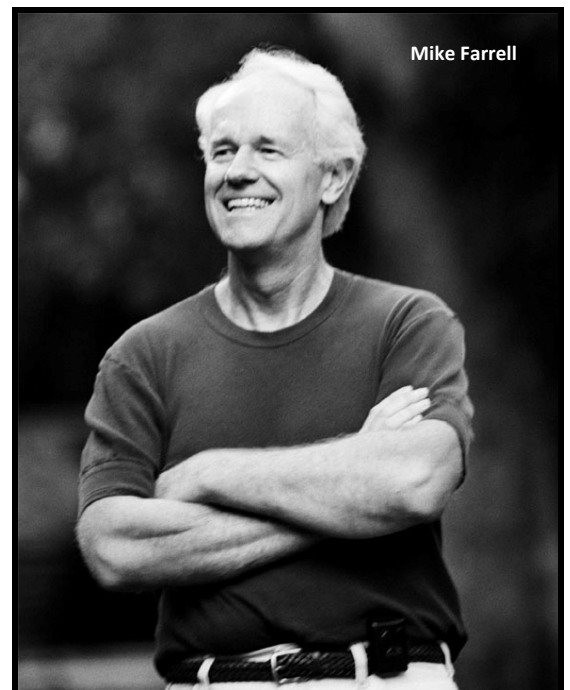
AHS Mountain Avenue Theatre
201 South Mountain Avenue, Ashland

\$25 for premium seats

\$20 for general admission

Tickets available July 1
at ShowTix4U.com, by e-mailing
tickets@AshlandNewPlays.org,
or by calling (541) 488-7995

Tickets also for sale after July 15
at **Paddington Station**
125 East Main Street, Ashland



ASHLAND NEW PLAYS FESTIVAL

PO Box 3314
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Sunday, June 12 • 7 p.m.

The Limits of Bliss

Paschal Winery
1122 Suncrest Road, Talent

Saturday, August 13 • 7:30 p.m.

A Walk in the Woods

AHS Mountain Avenue Theatre
201 South Mountain Avenue, Ashland

Wednesday–Sunday • October 19–23

ANPF 2011

Unitarian Church
87 4th Street, Ashland

Save the Dates

OUR MISSION

Ashland New Plays Festival assists playwrights in the development of new works through public readings and offers an educational forum to the community through discussions and workshops.

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