Chat room drama connects in intimate OSF venue

By Edith Decker
of the Daily Courier

Freshening up William Shakespeare's work is a Oregon Shakespeare Festival specialty, but there's nothing fresher than "Water by the Spoonful."

The 2012 Pulitzer Prize winning play produced off Broadway — closing just last year — is about an online chat room for recovering crack addicts and also a young Marine's recovery after his tour in Iraq.

Theater Review

Directed by Shishir Kurup, it's dramatic stuff, but also with a sense of humor and the ring of truth. After all, playwright Quiara Alegria Hudes based "Water by the Spoonful" on interviews with a distant former Marine cousin and his extended family who live in the Puerto Rican neighborhoods of Philadelphia.

Here, two sisters have gone in different directions. One became a neighborhood organizer, the other a crack addict. When the play starts, the organizer is dying of cancer (she doesn't appear on stage) and the addict, Odessa, has been clean for seven years and, rejected by her family, has formed a new network online. She monitors a chat room for recovering addicts while living off her meager wages as a cleaning woman.

Odessa's son, Elliot, the returned Marine, is caring for his aunt, who raised him, along with his cousin Yazmin, a music teacher.

Nearly every character in this play is haunted — Elliott quite literally by an Iraqi man he shot. Certainly the online addicts are. They include a young Asian American woman, Orangutan, who seeks her roots in Japan, where her parents adopted her; a middle-aged IRS worker, Chutes&Ladders, who avoids human contact as part of his effort to stay sober; and a formerly successful computer programmer, Fountainhead, who is new to the chat room.

JENNY GRAHAM/Oregon Shakespeare Festival

Odessa, played by Vilma Silva, monitors the conversation on her online chat room for recovering drug addicts with participants, played by, from left, Celeste Den, Bruce A. Young and Barret O'Brien. Screens at the back show their log-ons when they're on stage.

And, of course, Odessa is haunted by her family, both those present and those now missing.

As all these people reach out, sometimes with excruciating care and desperation, toward human contact, an undeniable sense of hope comes through in this wonderful play.

As you'd expect from the festival, the performances are all exceptional. Vilma Silva is wonderful as Odessa, known online as Haikumom, who tries to care for her band of chat room misfits via her ancient computer. Silva is celebrating her 19th season with the festival and it seems the small Thomas Theatre draws in those excellent veterans.

Daniel Jose Molina as Odessa's lost son, the soldier, is also excellent as Elliott fights to keep a job, deal with his injured leg and far more injured psyche. Festival goers might remember Molina as Romeo from two seasons ago.

Bruce A. Young is new to the festival, but fresh from Broadway and theaters around the country. As the shy, witty, self-deprecating IRS worker, Young injects both humor and desperation into Chutes&Ladders, who eventually takes a huge risk to make a real connection.

Celeste Den is great as the quirky, jumpy and genuine Orangutan, while Barret O'Brien has some intense scenes as Fountainhead, who is still coming to terms with his addiction and finds a giant helping of "been there, done that" no-nonsense from the chat room.

Nancy Rodriguez plays the author herself, really, the professor who escaped the barrio and all the pitfalls of poverty she sees her relatives falling into. However, she has her own issues as her marriage and career are stalling. She's the steadying influence for her family, though, just as Odessa steadies her online family.

The set, designed by Sibyl Wickersheimer, augmented by lighting by Geoff Korf, is almost a character itself. The small platforms almost look like giant keyboard keys. At the back of the stage are four screens that light up when the chat room members are online.

This play about the connections and disconnections of modern families — families of all types — will keep you thinking for days after you leave the theater. Tickets have been selling fast, by the way, so get one if you can.

"Water by the Spoonful" by Quiara Alegria Hudes plays at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's Thomas Theatre on various dates through June 20 and then takes a break, coming back Sept. 4 to Nov. 2.

For ticket availability and information, see www.osfashland.org or call 541-482-4331.

Tonight's prime-time network highlights

C = Charter, D = Dish, DT = DirecTV

	C	D	DT	6 PM	6:30	7 PM	7:30	8 PM	8:30	9 PM	9:30	10 PM	10:30	11 PM	11:30
BROADCAST															
KOBI 5	5	5	5	**NBC 5 News at 6:00** The daily news. (N)	**NBC 5 News at 6:30** (N)	**Entertainment Tonight** (N) (HD)	**The Insider** (N) (HD)	**Revolution:** Austin City Limits Jason wants the Patriots' Texas plans. (N) (HD)		**Law & Order: Special Victims Unit:** Downloaded Child Suspected abuse. (N) (HD)		**(:01) Chicago P.D.:** At Least It's Justice Voight has to pull Halstead's badge. (N) (HD)		**NBC 5 News at 11:00** (N)	**(:35) Tonight Show Jimmy Fallon** (HD)
this 5.2	285			**(5:00) Macho Callahan** ('70, Western) ★½ David Janssen, Jean Seberg.		**Red River** ('48) ★★★½ John Wayne, Montgomery Clift. A young man disagrees with the way his foster father runs his cattle empire and eventually runs off to form his own empire, but his father vows vengeance. (NR)					**Another Man, Another Chance** ('77) ★★ James Caan, Geneviève Bujold. In flight from the Prussian war, a woman and her photographer boyfriend come to America and set up a photo shop in the Wild West. (PG)				
KSYS 8	8	8	8	**California's Gold:** Mattress	**Nightly Business Report** (N) (HD)	**The PBS NewsHour** (N) (HD)		**Nature:** Ireland's Wild River A cameraman captures the natural history of the River Shannon for one year. (R) (HD)			**NOVA:** Wild Predator Invasion Predators returned to restore balance. (N) (HD)		**Secrets of the Dead:** Carthage's Lost Warriors S. America refuge. (N) (HD)		**Oregon Experience:** Opal Whiteley
WORLD 8.2	298			**Seeds of Resiliency** Stories of overcoming challenges shared. (R) (HD)		**Tavis Smiley** (R) (HD)	**Tavis Smiley** (R) (HD)	**BBC World News** International news.	**Journal** (R)	**Charlie Rose** (N) (HD)		**Democracy Now!** Global news featuring headlines, interviews and investigation is explored.		**Seeds of Resiliency** Stories of overcoming challenges shared. (R) (HD)	
CREATE 8.3	297			**A Chef's Life** Sweet potato farm. (HD)	**Kevin Dundon's Modern** (HD)	**Ask This Old House** Shower valve. (HD)	**Steves' Europe:** Portugal's Heartland	**Rudy Maxa:** Thailand, Andaman Islands	**Lidia's Kitchen:** All in the Pantry	**Cook's Country** Dreamy cake. (HD)	**Mexico: One Plate at a Time** (HD)	**Clodagh's Irish Food Trails** (HD)	**Steves' Europe:** Portugal's Heartland	**Lidia's Kitchen:** All in the Pantry	**Cook's Country** Dreamy cake. (HD)
KTVL 10	10	10	10	**News 10 at 6pm** (N)	**Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?** (R)	**Inside Edition** (N) (HD)	**Extra** (N) (HD)	**Survivor: Cagayan** (N) (HD)		**Criminal Minds:** Blood Relations Longstanding feud between families. (N) (HD)		**CSI: Crime Scene Investigation:** The Fallen (N) (HD)		**News 10 at 11pm** (N)	**Late Show with David Letterman** (HD)
CW 10.2	11	11	14	**King of the Hill:** Maid in Arlen (TV14)	**The Cleveland Show:** Frapp Attack (HD)	**Seinfeld:** The Phone Message	**Rules of Engagement:** The Score (HD)	**Arrow:** Deathstroke Slade faces the aftermath of attacking. (N) (HD)		**The 100:** Earth Kills Clarke, Finn and Wells face acidic fog. (N) (HD)		**Rules of Engagement:** Les-Bro (HD)	**Seinfeld:** The Merv Griffin Show	**Community:** Epidemiology (TV14) (HD)	**Community:** Competitive Ecology (HD)
KDRV 12	12	12	12	**Newswatch 12 at 6pm** (N)	**Newswatch 12 at 6:30pm** (N)	**Jeopardy!** (N) (HD)	**Wheel of Fortune** (N) (HD)	**The Middle:** The Smell (N) (HD)	**Suburgatory** Dallas' mother. (N) (HD)	**Modern Family** Wedding topper. (N) (HD)	**(:31) Mixology:** Tom & Maya II (N) (HD)	**Nashville:** Crazy Maddie's news creates a media storm. (N) (HD)		**Newswatch 12 at 11pm** (N)	**(:35) Jimmy Kimmel Live** (HD)
LWN 12.2	291			**Paid Program** Sponsored.	**Paid Program** Sponsored.	**Mexico: One Plate at a Time** (HD)	**My Family Recipe Rocks!**	**My Family Recipe Rocks!**	**Food Rush** Eatery & food truck.	**Steven and Chris** Steven and Chris discuss entertainment, fashion, cooking and decorating.		**Paid Program** Sponsored.	**Paid Program** Sponsored.	**Mexico: One Plate at a Time** (HD)	**Food Rush** Eatery & food truck.
BLTV 30	22	30	30	**3 ABN Today** Musical guests and speakers. (TV G)		**Amazing Facts Presents** Study hour.	**Prayer Quest** Bonding with Christ.	**Revelation of Jesus Christ** Pastor Kenneth Cox unpacks scripture. (TV G)		**Variety** Variety of topics. (TV G)	**Bible Questions Answered** (TV G)	**Understanding the Book of John**		**Walking with Jesus** Tips for Christians.	**Melody From My Heart** (TV G)
KMVU 26	13	26	26	**The Big Bang Theory** (HD)	**The Big Bang Theory** (HD)	**Modern Family** Jay's birthday. (HD)	**Modern Family:** Fizbo (HD)	**American Idol:** Finalists Perform (N) (HD)				**Fox 26 News First at Ten** (N)	**(:35) TMZ** (N)	**(:05) The Arsenio Hall Show** Late night variety/talk show. (HD)	
MeTV 26.2	293			**The Rifleman:** Home Ranch (TV G)	**The Rifleman:** End of a Young Gun	**M*A*S*H:** Sticky Wicket	**M*A*S*H:** Major Fred C. Dobbs	**Gilligan's:** Water, Water Everywhere	**Gilligan's:** So Sorry My Island Now	**Hogan:** The Kamikazes Are Coming	**F Troop:** Carpetbagging, Anyone?	**The Bob Newhart Show:** Bum Voyage	**Newhart** Jerry stays over. (TV G)	**The Twilight Zone:** The Howling Man	**Mason** Global trouble.

Attached woman can't resist flirting with other men

Dear Abby
Abigail Van Buren
Syndicated columnist

Dear Abby: I have been with my current boyfriend for a year and a half and I love him dearly. However, I often find myself drawn to other guys who I know are nothing but trouble. It never goes further than simple flirting, but I still feel guilty for doing it when I'm in a relationship. How do I keep myself from temptation? **— Hard To Resist**

Dear Hard To Resist: Temptation to do what? To involve yourself with a man who is nothing but trouble? A way to discourage that would be to ask yourself how you would feel if you lost your boyfriend. That would be a high price to pay for acting immaturely.

However, if you're asking how to overcome the IMPULSE, my advice is to have an honest conversation with yourself about why you feel the need. Most of the women (and men) who act this way are constantly trying to prove to themselves that they are attractive. If this could be you, then start working on your self-esteem, because if you don't, I predict you'll ruin a good relationship.

Dear Abby: I'm in my 50s and overweight. I work hard, eat three meals a day and am — more or less — healthy except for sore feet after work. I'm aware of the medical warnings. Who isn't? But I have decided to accept myself as I am, relax and be happy.

For years I have been hard on myself for not being slim. This is me in my 50s. I don't expect myself to be slim like I was in my 20s. Now I can smile, breathe easier, have a good time, and finally buy the new clothes I have put off buying until I was thinner. My new spirit is weightless and my new attitude has made my life more meaningful. Any thoughts? **— Living Free At Last**

Dear Living Free: Only this, that we all have choices to make about our health, what is important to us and how we want to live our lives. You have made yours, and at this point it appears to have been the right one for you. May it ever be thus.

Dear Abby: My husband has a paralyzing fear of driving over bridges. It interferes with our life together. He is otherwise healthy, but will not see a therapist for this problem.

We have been married for 27 years. I am 63 and he is 67. I am very sad that our life is so limited. Any advice? **— Landlocked In Virginia**

Dear Landlocked: It would be interesting to know how your husband developed this phobia. But because he refuses to do anything about it and you feel restricted, consider traveling with another companion.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Tickets for Douglas County Fair headline acts on sale Saturday

Reserved concert seating for headline entertainers at the Douglas County Fair go on sale Saturday.

Tickets will be available in person at the fairgrounds in Roseburg starting at 8 a.m. or by going online at www.douglasfairgrounds.com starting at noon.

The concert lineup is blues/rock artist Jonny Lang, Aug. 6; country artist Thomas Rhett, Aug. 7; post-grunge/alternative rock band Seether, Aug. 8, and Deep Purple, known for hard rock and heavy metal, on Aug. 9.

All concerts are free with fair admission.

Reserved seating for Wednesday through Friday concerts is $25 plus fair admission, or purchase a package deal for $33 including admission.

For Saturday's Deep Purple concert, reserved seating is $30 plus fair admission or get a package deal for $38 including admission.

CD party

Jazz guitar icon John Stowell, left, and vocalist Kendra Shank are giving an intimate concert and CD release event April 11 at Paschal Winery, 1122 Suncrest Road in Talent. They'll perform originals, jazz standards, ballads and folk songs as well as free improvisations. Tickets to the 7 p.m. show are $25 general, $20 for Siskiyou Music Project members and $10 for full-time students. Call 541-488-3869 or go to siskiyoumusicproject.com.

Duplicate Bridge Club reports winners

The Grants Pass Duplicate Bridge Club announces the winners for the week of March 24:

- March 24 — Arn Williams and Bob Harkey; Donna Rund and Peg Meyer
- March 25 — Barbara Erickson and Nancy Hitchcock
- March 26 — Bryan Archer and Donna Anderson
- March 28 — Phyllis and Arn Williams; Mary Louise Hendricks and Myra Falletta.

For videos, photo galleries and more, visit **thedailycourier.com**

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26th Year Honored as Tree City
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• Planting of a Tulip Tree