



SPOTLIGHT

401 North 6th Street

March 23, 2019

www.fslt.org

Dates: Opening Night Gala of FSLT's production of *The Graduate* will be Thursday, April 4. Regular performances will be April 5-6 and 10-13. A Sunday Matinee will be offered on April 7.

Show Times: All evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m. Patrons may be seated after 6:45 p.m. The matinees begin at 2:00 p.m. Patrons may be seated after 1:15 p.m.

Season Flex Pass Seat Selection: Seat selection begins 7:00 a.m. Saturday, March 23. Select seats online at www.fslt.org or call the Box Office at 479-783-2966 (extn: 2) to request seats on the phone. Flex Pass patrons may also purchase ONE additional ticket for every pass they have.

General Public Tickets: Tickets are available beginning 7:00 a.m. Thursday, March 28. Purchase online at www.fslt.org or call the Box Office at 479-783-2966 (extn: 2) to purchase on the phone. Gala Opening Night tickets \$27 / All other performances \$12.

Box Office Phone Calls: Be prepared to leave a message with details about your seat/ticket request including a phone number where you can easily be reached. During variable hours, volunteers will return calls in the order they are received.

Reminder: To reach the Box Office, select Extn: 2

NEW FOR 2019

Online ticketing and seat selection now available at www.fslt.org.

THE GRADUATE

1960s Classic Film takes on New Life as a Stage Play at FSLT

"Mrs. Robinson, you are the most attractive of all my parents' friends."
~ Benjamin, THE GRADUATE

FSLT kicks off spring with the adult dramatic-comedy *The Graduate*, April 4 through 13. Veteran director Micki Voelkel, stages this comedy by Terry Johnson based on the novel by Charles Web, and the screenplay by Calder Willingham and Buck Henry – best known as a 1967 film starring Dustin Hoffman and Anne Bancroft.

Set in 1964, we see recent college graduate Benjamin Braddock (Aaron Ray) depressed and directionless despite his impressive achievements. His proud parents (Jon Gustafson and Tina Dale) celebrate with a party. When the glamorous Mrs. Robinson (Susan Hickam), wife of his father's oldest friend Hal Robinson (Charles Belt), attempts to seduce him, Ben embarks on a wild affair. Complications ensue when Ben meets the Robinsons' daughter Elaine (Jamie Lambdin) and falls madly in love.

Rounding out the cast are a company of players who fill-in other roles and provide color. They are Bradley Kidder Jr., Kim Kidder, Eric Wells, John Hall, Carry Shamblin, Sonya Hiatt, John Faulkner, T.J. Dudley, Emilee Dale, and Molly Tennison. The veteran crew includes producer Joe Graham, assistant director Eric Wells, stage manager Audra Sargent, assistant stage manager Morgan Henderson, costumers Valerie Valentine and Janet Renwick, set designer/builder Scott Black, prop master Neal Goodwin, and light designer Joseph Reed.

See *The Graduate* on page 3



FSLT Going (Mostly) Digital

Over the next few months, FSLT will be moving gradually toward consolidation of our patron contact lists and increased digital distribution of our Spotlight newsletter. You may receive a communication from us to request or confirm your willingness to receive the Spotlight by email. Email delivery of our newsletter is recommended since postal service has become increasingly undependable. Migrating to digital distribution will reduce printing and mailing costs (and save some trees), and provide better service to our patrons. We will, of course, continue to send printed newsletters by postal mail if you wish, and we will provide you with instructions on how to notify us if that is your preference.

Director's Letter

How do you recreate an indelible film classic on the stage? This stage play by Terry Johnson goes back to the original Charles Webb novel to give us a deeper insight into the characters. I have kept *The Graduate* on my directing wish list for more than a decade waiting for the right actors – the time is most definitely now! Wait until you see the performances by Aaron Ray, Susan Hickam, and Jamie Lambin. The whole cast is simply wonderful with loving attention paid to each role small or large.

One reason I was drawn to this show is the year in which it is set - 1964. What a great time for music! While I have given a nod to the original film soundtrack with its classic Simon and Garfunkle music, the slightly earlier era depicted in the play has allowed me to use music ranging from the Supremes to Johnny Cash to the Beatles.

So let's go back in time together to remember the confusion and disillusionment of young adulthood, and the redemptive power of love. See you at the theatre!

- Micki Voelkel, *Director*



Off-Season Show **A PERFECT LIKENESS** plays April 25-27

Jamie Lambdin makes her FSLT directorial debut with *A Perfect Likeness: Carroll Photographs Dickens* April 25-27 at 7:30 p.m. This play by Daniel Rover Singer features veteran FSLT performers Duff Taylor and Eric Wells as beloved Victorian authors Charles Dickens and Charles Dodgson (also known as Lewis Carroll).

Dodgson (Wells) invites celebrity author Dickens (Taylor) to his Oxford home to pose for a photographic portrait. Dickens accepts because he is intrigued by the author of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. A meeting of minds ensues as the conversation between these quirky and brilliant men continues through its funny and revealing climax.

The crew includes director Jamie Lambdin, producer Eric Wells, stage manager Brandon Bolin, and show mentor Micki Voelkel. Doors open at 6:45 p.m. with the performance starting at 7:30 p.m. As an off-season production, admission is not provided by a Season Flex Pass. Admission is \$7 at the door with open seating.

The Graduate opens April 4

Director Voelkel says, "I've been eyeing this script for about a decade. I love the classic film, but I also love how this script goes back to the original novel and expands the characters a bit – especially the characters of Elaine and Mrs. Robinson. It is a familiar story for many of our patrons, and it will push the edge for our audiences just a little." She adds, "The intimate space at FSLT is a challenge for this script because I have to be mindful of how close the actors are to the audience. What is perceived as funny on a big stage twenty feet away from the audience could be a little disturbing in a small space like at FSLT. So I've been careful to make sure that the staging and characterizations tell the story without making the audience uncomfortable."

Leading actor Aaron Ray says, "I've always been a fan of the movie, and this presented a great opportunity for me to play a dramatic role and move beyond the comedies I generally go for. Any time you assume an iconic role it's a challenge to make it your own – for instance, we all associate Ben with Dustin Hoffman. But I think our audiences will appreciate our interpretation of the classic film."

Susan Hickam agrees, "Portraying the most iconic Mrs. Robinson requires an intensity and depth of feeling that to me is a culmination of the different roles I have performed here on the FSLT stage over the past few years. But unlike any of the other characters, in this one, I am able to bring in a deeper level of hurt, tragedy, and denial."

Jamie Lambdin is excited to be playing Elaine: "The intimacy of the FSLT stage

requires that we put on a believable front, so that the audiences get to have an honest experience. This story is an American classic, but a rather unusual one and not traditional at all – however, it offers complex characters and a roller coaster of emotions. This is probably the reason why it became an instant hit and a Hollywood legend when the movie was released in the 1960s."

The casting has allowed the actors to stretch. Jon Gustafson has previously only acted in musicals. "I have been looking for an opportunity to play in a dramatic role to further develop my acting – so I was delighted to be cast as Mr. Braddock. My wife and I have raised three children to adulthood, so I can certainly identify with Mr. Braddock's concerns regarding his son's transition to adulthood."

New performers are always welcome at FSLT. Charles Belt says, "I previously performed with the Mulberry Theatre, and on several stages in Chicago. I have always wanted to be a part of the Fort Smith Little Theatre, and jumped at the chance to audition for this show."

The show is a definite PG-13 for strong language and adult situations. Parents should consider the subject matter when deciding whether to bring children.

Seat selection opens for Season Flex Pass patrons on Saturday, March 23. Members of the general public may purchase seats beginning Thursday, March 28. Tickets for the Gala Opening performance on April 4 are \$27. All other seats are \$12. Purchase tickets and select seats online at www.fslt.org or call the Box Office at 479-783-2966 (extn:2).



A Round of Applause

We greatly appreciate these generous businesses that recently provided goods and services to FSLT.

- **Marmic Fire and Safety** – extinguisher inspection and service
- **Fort Smith Coffee Co.** – complimentary coffee for patrons in 2019
- **Galen Hunter, MAHG Architects** – project drawings
- **Times Record** – promotion of season passes

Seat Selection / Ticketing

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Seat Tickets Checked By Ushers

You can bypass the Box Office when you arrive by showing your print-at-home ticket or your ticket confirmation on your smart phone to an usher. Alternately, go to the Box Office upon your arrival, pick up your seat ticket, then proceed to an usher at either aisle.

Online Order Fees

Online orders will be subject to a modest processing fee of \$2.00 per order, regardless of the number of tickets in the order. Order fees will be waived for Season Flex Pass patrons. To help maintain our affordable ticket prices and fees, please consider making a donation to FSLT.

Computers Courtesy of WACF

With a gift from the Western Arkansas Community Foundation (an affiliate of the Arkansas Community Foundation), FSLT was able to purchase the computer equipment needed for our new online ticketing system. We are very grateful for their generosity that helped make our system implementation both affordable and successful.



Deepu Thomas (FSLT Board President) with Pettus Kincannon (WACF Executive Director) - in the box office where computers have been installed.

Fort Smith Little Theatre
SPOTLIGHT

P.O. Box 3752, Fort Smith, AR 72913

www.fslt.org

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From the Top...

I'm always amazed by how numerous small things can come together to create one big event. This happens all around us, and it certainly happens at FSLT. *Happily Ever After: A Wedding Comedy* is one such example. From casting, directing, set construction, actors learning lines, blocking, and timing – a lot of things came together to create this well-received and successful production. Congrats to the cast and crew, and thank you for doing all those little things well.

Another example would be the recent launch of our online ticketing system. Over many months, a collection of uniquely qualified volunteers juggled lots of moving parts to lead us through a series of small steps. After the software was configured and our box office volunteers were trained, we awaited our patrons' response. We were delighted by two noteworthy reactions. One– everyone was incredibly patient (for which we are so grateful)! Two– for our first show of 2019, 49% of tickets purchased and seats selected were performed by patrons online. 30% utilization was our goal, so 49% was astonishing. This reinforced my admiration for how small steps and little pieces can lead to one very big success. Thank you to the volunteers who helped with the implementation, and to our patrons for your support.

We will continue to tweak the system and our processes so that your experiences with FSLT are as smooth as our shows are entertaining. And speaking of entertaining, don't miss traveling with us back to the 1960s for *The Graduate*. See you at the theatre!

- Deepu Thomas, *President*

Next Up

Auditions for *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, directed by Summer Robinson, will be held at 7 p.m. on Monday, April 29. Callbacks will be held on Tuesday, April 30. The cast calls for 13 males ages 20-65+ and 4 females ages 20-55+. Production dates are June 6-15. For more information, visit our website www.fslt.org, or find us on Facebook.

Set Builders Needed

Make new friends and use your handyman skills to build sets on weekdays or weekends. You don't need to be a master craftsman; just be able to use a saw, screwdriver, hammer, or paintbrush. Work as little or as much as you want, and be a part of something fun and creative. Learn more: 479-783-2966 (extn: 4), or info@fslt.org.

Season Flex Pass patrons are urged to select seats before Thursday, March 28.