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SHOTGUN PLAYERS PRESENT

# *Our Town*

By Thornton Wilder, Directed by Susannah Martin

**Berkeley**— Shotgun Players has a reputation for creating fresh interpretations of the classics. For our final production of our 23<sup>rd</sup> Season we are proud to present *Our Town*, the Pulitzer Prize winning play by Thornton Wilder, featuring original music by The Bengsons. ***Our Town* begins performances December 4<sup>th</sup> and continues through January 11<sup>th</sup> at The Ashby Stage.**

Written in 1938, *Our Town* is deceptively simple: a play in three acts, each focusing on a different slice of life in the town of Grover's Corners. Wilder specifies that the play should have no curtain, no sets. With this play, Wilder was aiming at nothing less than revitalizing American theater. He wrote that in the 1920s: "I began to feel that theatre was not only inadequate, it was evasive; it did not wish to draw upon its deeper potentialities. I found the word for it: it aimed to be *soothing*. The tragic had no heat; the comic had no bite; the social criticism failed to indict us with responsibility. I began to search for the point where theatre had run off the track – where it had chosen – and been permitted – to become a minor art and an inconsequential diversion."

Wilder further describes the obsession with filling the stage with scenery and props that lock the action into a specific time and place. "When you emphasize *place* in theatre, you drag down and limit and harness time to it... Under such production methods the characters are all dead before the action starts." Instead, with *Our Town*, Wilder removes all barriers between actors and audience; we are all part of the community of Grover's Corners.

Director Susannah Martin comments: "What does it mean to do *Our Town* in Berkeley, in 2014? When people think of Thornton Wilder's 1938 play, they think quaint, they think Americana, they think old-fashioned, sentimental, romanticism. But what if I were to tell you that *Our Town* is an Expressionist masterpiece and a deeply moving meditation on life, death, and the breadth and scope of the universe? Truly, somewhere in the world right now, someone is performing this play - why? What is this play telling us about the way we live and the way we die?"

Throughout the script, Wilder includes songs that accentuate the action of the play. Shotgun Players is proud to announce that indie-rock duo The Bengsons will be creating original music and soundscapes with the cast of *Our Town*. The Bengsons created the critically acclaimed *Hundred Days* at Z Space earlier this year. Director Susannah Martin comments: "Sound and music will play a large role in the production. We're asking: what are the sounds that create the texture of our daily lives? What is the music that is always present? What are the sounds that surround us, create that hum, and connect us to the larger universe whether we realize it or not?"

Thornton Wilder wrote of *Our Town*: “Our claim, our hope, our despair are in the mind — not in scenery... The climax of the play needs only five feet of boarding and the passion to know what life means to us.”

*Our Town* features Set Design by **Nina Ball**, Costume Design by **Christine Crook**, Sound Design by **Theodore J. Hulsker**, Light Design by **Heather Basarab**, & Properties Design by **Caela Fujii**.

The cast of *Our Town* features

El Beh, Madeline H.D. Brown\*, Valerie Fachman, Sam Jackson, Tim Kniffin\*, Christine Macomber, Molly Noble\*, Karen Offereins, Josh Schell, Wiley Naman Strasser, Michelle Talgarow, Christopher Ward White, Eli Wirtschafter, Don Wood

(\*Member of Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers.)

## **CALENDAR LISTING**

**WHAT:** Shotgun Players has a reputation for creating fresh interpretations of the classics. For our final production of our 23<sup>rd</sup> Season we are proud to present *Our Town*, the Pulitzer Prize winning play by Thornton Wilder, featuring original music by The Bengsons.

**WHEN:** *Our Town* Previews December 4<sup>th</sup> through December 10<sup>th</sup>; Opens Thursday, December 11<sup>th</sup> and continues through January 25th. Runs Wednesday and Thursday at 7PM, Friday and Saturday at 8PM, Sunday at 5PM except for the final Sunday, January 25th which will be at 2pm.

**WHERE:** The Ashby Stage, 1901 Ashby Avenue, Berkeley

**TICKET PRICES:** December 4 – 10<sup>th</sup> are Pay-What-You-Can. Regular performance nights \$20 - \$30. **Shotgun has a new MAD Tickets deal for people 25 and younger - \$5 tickets!** Advance reservations strongly advised.

**For more information go to [www.shotgunplayers.org](http://www.shotgunplayers.org) or call 510.841.6500**