



Theatre Haunted by Architect? Actress Mara Purl Portrays Julia Morgan, Treading the Boards in Morgan's Own Building, The Monday Club of San Luis Obispo

Actress and best-selling author Mara Purl takes center stage as the famous architect in first-ever Central Coast performance of "Becoming Julia Morgan" by Belinda Taylor, October 6, 7, 8th at The Monday Club in San Luis Obispo, California.

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If Julia Morgan breathed again the air of the Central Coast, she'd look, sound, and act a lot like well-known actress Mara Purl. "To be performing as Julia in a building she actually designed and built is an honor, a thrill, and a bit spooky," the actress admitted. Does the architect haunt the building she built in 1934? "I do feel she haunts our stage. And toward the end of the play, my character indeed haunts a scene about a young woman planning to follow in her footsteps."

Purl, who has performed in the Central Coast region several times before, adds, "This production is living history at its best. Our director Linda Wilson has paid scrupulous attention to historic detail in costumes, set design, and in her own almost encyclopedic knowledge of Morgan's career."

The Monday Club, designed and built by Morgan in 1933 and 1934, and beautifully preserved by devoted club members, is one of two buildings in SLO County created by the famous architect—the other being the Hearst Castle, known all over the world as one of the most magnificent estates ever built.

"If we think history is irrelevant, nothing could be further from the truth," the performer continued. "Julia Morgan was breaking glass ceilings even as she built them. She was such a key trail blazer that, frankly, female architects, and women in general would not be where we are today were it not for pioneers like her. She gave up having a personal life and devoted herself to her work. For her, having it all meant designing, building, and also mentoring others with every fiber of her being."

A lot connects the actress with the woman she portrays. One became an rising star as the new twentieth century dawned, the other at the dawn of the twenty-first. Both have spent many years as frequent visitors to the Central Coast, where both have ultimately made their professional marks and achieved fame. And both are practitioners of balancing the arts and the sciences or, as Purl would say, "head and heart." Purl will be speaking at a private Monday Club event on October 2nd, on the subject of Sacred Geometry—of keen interest both to Purl and to Morgan.

Mara Purl is also an author with a series of books set along the Central Coast. Her Milford-Haven novels and short stories began rocketing to the top of the Amazon and Barnes & Noble best-seller lists in 2011. As a performer, she's well known locally for co-starring in "Sea Marks" by Gardner McKay at the Pfeiffer Pough Playhouse in Cambria, and Christopher Law first brought the play to the Playhouse in 1984, and reprised his roles to sold-out houses in 2015. They've now co-starred in that play in six productions here and elsewhere. When Purl was approached by Wilson about taking on the lead in "Julia," she recommended Law for the role of Hearst. The director agreed, and Law was delighted. "It's a smaller role," he explained, "but I'm thrilled at the opportunity to portray someone who made such an indelible mark on the region. He was just as much an icon as Morgan, and together they created something amazing." Morgan and Hearst were never romantically involved. But their professional friendship was of key importance to both of them, and lasted through decades. Purl and Law always enjoy performing together.

Co-stars playing important multiple roles include well-known veterans of local stages Wendy Marie Martin and Jeff Walters, Dan Murry, Tara Brinnen, Corina Sullivan, and David Rosenthal.

Mara played the recurring character "Doris Cook" on NBC's "Days of Our Lives." She then founded a production company and created "Milford-Haven U.S.A.," a serial drama loosely based upon Cambria. The show, co-starring a well-known L.A. based cast including Erin Gray, Linda Purl, Ed Begley, Jr., Michael Horse, and several others, became the first American radio drama to air on BBC radio where it enjoyed a following of 4.5 million listeners. Purl's story later came to the attention of New York publishers, who began publishing her novel series in hardcover in 2011. Since then, book one "What the Heart Knows" and book two "Where the Heart Lives" have both become national best-sellers, as have her prequel short stories, "When Humans Dream" and "When Molecules Watch." Her third novel, "When Others Play," makes its debut October 14th. National Indie Author Day.

Mara has an on-line following of seventeen million when she does her blog tours, and she posts regularly for Happily Ever After on USA Today. She is a frequent guest on radio talk shows, and also speaks for the American Heart Association, for women's organizations, for writers' conferences and for colleges and universities. Mara and her books have a large following in the region. She has been a frequent speaker at the Central Coast Writers Conference, has exhibited annually at the Central Coast Book Festival, and her most recent event with a joint book signing-and-performance at Colesloe Bookstore in Morro Bay.

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TARA GORE

Bellekeep Books
+1 (719) 422-2929
Email >

MARA PURL

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Mara Purl as Architect Julia Morgan

Julia Morgan was breaking glass ceilings as she built them.

Media



Christopher Law as William Randolph Hearst



Hearst Castle sketch by Mara Purl



Juli Morgan



Mara Purl, author & actress

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