

COLUMNIST - JUDY SALAMACHA

Becoming Julia Morgan At the Monday Club



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Then & Now

By Judy Salamacha

Early in the play "Becoming Julia Morgan," Julia delivers her standard retort to reporters believing her work speaks for itself, however, newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst has insisted Jerry Mac interview his architect about their San Simeon project.

Playwright Belinda Taylor has blended her journalist research expertise and storytelling talents to create, "Master Architect" a fast-paced, historically charming glimpse of Morgan's amazing life and career. The play will be performed Friday-Sunday, Oct. 6-8 at The Monday Club, one of 700 California buildings designed by Morgan while working on Hearst's Castle starting in the 1930s.

San Francisco Examiner's Mac persists, "How'd you get to be you, the first licensed woman architect in California? You must be the first woman master-builder, ever, in the entire world. Won't people wonder one day about the lady who built those amazing buildings?"



"I don't give interviews.
I'm not one of those
talking architects."

In a world and time when most careers were not open to women, Morgan also became the first woman to be accepted in and to graduate from the School of Architecture at L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris and might be the first person — male or

female — to stand her ground with Hearst and continue working for him.

While much is known about her creative projects, little has been documented about her private life or experiences working with Hearst. Taylor provides nuggets about her family; her working relationship with Hearst; her internal legacy debate; and her interest in helping other women achieve their dreams.

Cyndi Runstrom, a board member for The Monday Club, discovered the play and approached member Linda Wilson to direct. A seasoned SLO Little Theater actress and director, Wilson has lately focused on her musical talents, specifically Canzona Women's Ensemble Productions.

With script approval from Taylor, she adapted the last scene of the play to take place circa 1917 at The Monday Club. The playwright will be in attendance Opening Night and at the VIP reception with the cast.

Mara Purl will become Morgan and Christopher Law takes on the role of Hearst. Purl is best known as the author of the Milfred-Haven novels based on residents she met in Cambria 25-plus years ago, while on hiatus from Days of Our Lives performing Garner McKay's "Sea Marks" at the Pewter Plough Playhouse with Law as her co-star.

Together they revived the Irish play in 2015 and that same year Purl was also in the sold-out production at The Monday Club of "The Other Woman" by Victoria Zackheim, which Wilson directed as a benefit for the SLO Women's Shelter.

Formerly a television celebrity, Law left the business to develop Dumas African Safaris and recently moved from Hollywood to Cambria with his bride. With several Pewter Plough Playhouse credits, Jeff Walters plays Jerry Mac and PCPA alum, Wendy Marie Martin, plays his wife, Irene.

In debut roles David Rosenblatt takes on the role of Morgan's brother and confidante, Avery Morgan; Tara Brinkman plays Hollywood starlet, Marion Davies; and Corina Sullivan has multiple roles, including Jenny Mac, Jerry's granddaughter in the last scene opposite Dan Newton Murry as Jerry's son, Charlie, who was also Julia's go-to-the-flickers friend.

Tickets are available online at: www.mondayclubslo.org. Proceeds will support production of The Monday Club Fine Arts Awards.

Freelance writer, columnist and author of "Colonel Baker's Field: An American Pioneer Story," Judy Salamacha's Then & Now column is a regular feature of Simply