

WAXHAW

Storefront set for season's first show

Theater to present 'The Fragrance of Books'

Two-person show performed by Simpson Cook, Faris



BY JOHN ANDERSON
Correspondent

The Storefront Theatre will present the first play of the 2015-16 season at 7:30 p.m. on Oct. 3, and 2:30 p.m. Oct. 4, at Waxhaw Presbyterian Church.

The play is titled "The Fragrance of Books" by Storefront Theatre founder and director Judy Simpson Cook, who also

plays one of the roles in this two-person play. The other character is played by Melvin Faris of Monroe.

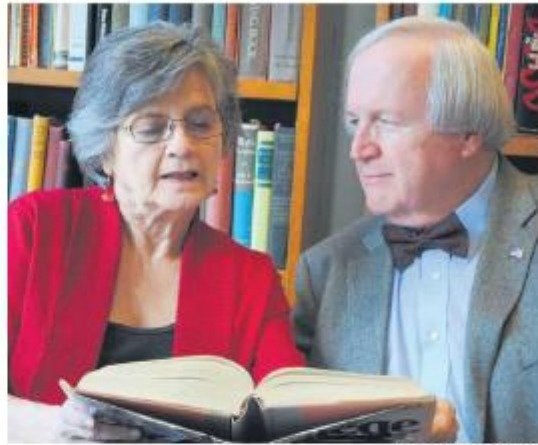
"I wanted two people to meet, get acquainted, and develop a relationship and I wanted the audience to see it happen," Simpson Cook said. "Carolee (played by Simpson Cook) owns a used book store. Jim (Faris) loves books. All the action is in the bookstore so the audience is there with them as their relationship begins and grows."

Both played a role in the genesis of the play.

"One day, Melvin Faris and I had lunch together in Waxhaw and afterwards dropped into the Waxhaw Reading Room," Simpson Cook said. "He saw an old textbook that he was convinced we'd studied in high school. When he opened the book and flipped through it, there was something about it that caught my imagination and led to the eventual completion of the play."

High school? Yes. Parkwood High School in the mid 1960s.

"I've known Judy Simpson Cook since we were in the ninth grade ...," Faris said. "It was nine years ago when, she dragged me



Judy Simpson Cook, left, and Melvin Faris will portray the roles of bookstore owner Carolee and Jim in Cook's latest play, "The Fragrance of Books."

kicking and screaming onto the stage of the nascent Storefront Theatre. Since then, she and I have acted together in seven plays, six of which she authored. For me, the experience has been incredible."

Simpson Cook said "I had seen Melvin in a number of plays at Parkwood and thought highly of his acting skills. I encouraged him to come and let me represent him as an actor but the work he was in (32 years with the Union County Sheriff Department) would not allow the flexibility of schedule. He was in the first play I did here. I didn't audition him and had some slight fear that what I thought was brilliant in high school might not be so brilliant now. It was instinct. I was sure I was right and had always been right. He has not let me down."

Tickets are \$15. Call

704-243-7283 or go to www.thestorefronttheatre.org

JONATHAN RYAN PERFORMS

When award-winning concert organist Jonathan Ryan blends imaginative programming and consummate technique in his upcoming solo concert at Wingate University's Austin Auditorium at 4 p.m. on Sept. 27, the audience will see that homecoming transcends football.

Laura Kratt, director of cultural events at Wingate University's Bette Center, said Ryan, a Wingate native, started playing the organ at age eight and, as a student, he often practiced on the organ at Wingate University.

He earned a bachelor of music degree with academic honors from the Cleveland Institute of Music and received a Master of Music degree from the Eastman School

of Music. He holds the highest-ranking professional certification from the American Guild of Organists.

Kratt said Ryan was awarded first prize in the 2009 Jordan II International Organ Competition, one of the most prestigious awards of any organ competition at the time. Ryan will perform seven works ranging from classical composers Vivaldi and Schumann to Wammes' 2011 composition "A ride on a High Speed Train."

Tickets to the Jonathan Ryan concert are free. Electronic tickets are available online at www.bettecenter.org or carolinatix.org. Tickets are available at the Bette Center Box Office by calling 704-233-8300 or in person (403 N. Camden Rd., Wingate).

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