
PLAYHOUSE WEST
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PLAYHOUSE WEST THANKS ITS AUDIENCE FOR 13 WONDERFUL YEARS

WALNUT CREEK: After a riveting 2007-8 season, which included two West Coast premieres and one Bay Area premiere, Playhouse West will close its doors on May 4. “It’s been an exciting and incredibly rewarding journey,” says artistic director and founder Lois Grandi. “But, after 13 years of producing thought-provoking theater, it is time to bring the curtain down one last time.”

Playhouse West’s final show, ironically titled “When Something Wonderful Ends,” will mark the final show by this innovative company. Directed by Grandi and featuring Janis Bergmann, the show plays April 4 – May 4 at the company’s beautiful jewel-box theater on Locust Street in Walnut Creek. The gripping one-woman show by Sherry Kramer moves between 1963 and now, between Tehran and Springfield, Mo, between radicalized mullahs and vintage Barbie dolls as it unravels the American Dream.

“It’s a wonderful show for us to celebrate our rich history,” says Grandi. “Sherry takes us on a whirl-wind of a Baby Boomer youth and the need to confront the complexities of today’s world, yet she does it with so much wit and humor. It has been a pleasure to direct this piece and to work with such a talented actress as Janis.”

The foundations for Playhouse West began in 1994 as Grandi and her board of directors began turning a small storefront next to Peet's Coffee on Locust Street into an intimate theater space. Grandi had previously used the space to teach her popular acting classes. Playhouse West opened in 1995 with a production of Arthur Miller's "After the Fall." Grandi recalls, "It was an ambitious work to begin with but we sold out. I had no idea so many people even knew we existed." Additional successes followed with the varied seasons including comedies, classics, musicals, and premieres. Posters and awards line the walls of the theater for the more than 60 productions the company has produced.

Grandi looks back over her years at Playhouse West with fondness. "So many people have told me over and over again how much they've enjoyed our productions, whether here at our home base or the seasons we produced at the Leshner Center. It's been a wonderful 13 years." Grandi hopes that another theater company will want to call the 49-seat venue home. "It's just perfect for theater, comedy, or music. I really want another company to have the same rich experience we've enjoyed," she adds. While Playhouse West will "retire," Grandi is doing anything but. The award-winning director looks forward to pursuing acting, directing, and teaching opportunities with other theater companies. "Now, I have the time to work with my colleagues that I so admire."

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