

(Printed from url=<https://www.ellsworthamerican.com/living/living-entertainment/gotts-island-born-ruth-moores-stories-come-alive-on-stage/>)

Gotts Island-born Ruth Moore's stories come alive on stage

August 10, 2018 by Jessica Piper on Entertainment, Lifestyle



STONINGTON — When Meg Taintor came to Maine, she couldn't help but notice the popularity of "I Read Ruth Moore" bumper stickers on and around Deer Isle. The "wildly specific literary bumper sticker" got her reading, thinking and eventually adapting the work of Moore, the Gotts Island-born author who once shared a *New York Times* bestseller list with George Orwell.

The result will take the stage on Thursday, Aug. 16, when Opera House Arts premieres "I Have Seen Horizons: Ruth Moore's Stories from Maine." The production, led by Taintor, director Natalya Baldyga and composer Veronica Barron, is adapted from seven of Moore's short stories.

"Ruth writes about this part of the world in a way that is really familiar," said Taintor, the actor-turned-playwright who also is the former artistic director of Opera House Arts. "It feels like someone sitting at a kitchen table, telling you a story about their grandmother. And it's completely relatable and really wonderful."

Taintor had previously adapted a storyline of Moore's debut novel "The Weir" as part of a project with Deer Isle-Stonington High School students. Last fall, she read a collection of Moore's short stories called "When Foley Craddock Tore Off My Grandfather's Thumb." It was



Ruth Moore
COURTESY OF MURIEL DAVISSON

“the best title in the history of the world,” Taintor said, and she approached Baldyga, a longtime friend and colleague, with the idea of adapting Moore’s work for theater.

Join Us!

Advertising Representative
position with an established sales territory and room to grow!
Full time 8a-5p Monday – Friday with benefit package.

APPLY NOW

Please submit a cover letter and resume to:
Kelly Cochrane • Advertising & Marketing Manager
The Ellsworth American
30 Water Street • Ellsworth, Maine 04605
kcochrane@ellsworthamerican.com
EOE

The Ellsworth American. The Islander

Careers at MDI Hospital

Quality of life equals quality of care.

Learn More >

Moore, who wrote over a dozen novels in her lifetime, is often characterized as a regional author — a label she always despised. While her works portray coastal Maine and often use the region’s idiosyncratic dialect, Baldyga and Taintor find that her themes are universal.

“We realized really quickly that it’s not about wacky characters from Downeast,” Baldyga said. “These are stories that, by looking at a very particular community, tell us something about human connections, or the ways that community is created, or the way that divisions happen between people.”

The tension between longtime residents and outsiders is a frequent theme in Moore’s writings. She saw the issue from multiple angles — after growing up in Hancock County and graduating from Ellsworth High School in 1921, she left to attend a teacher’s college in Albany, N.Y. She later worked in New York City and California before moving back to Maine in the 1940s and settling in Bass Harbor with her partner, Eleanor Mayo. Moore did much of her writing out of the home they built themselves in Bass Harbor on Mount Desert Island.

“She was earthy and brilliant and funny. No nonsense. She was a great storyteller, and a really good person,” said Sanford Phippen, the Hancock author who was a longtime friend of Moore and published a collection of her letters after her death.

Much of Moore’s work is memoir more than fiction, with characters frequently based on people with whom she grew up. The stories the pair chose to adapt range from silly and fun to deep and personal, although Taintor noted that the author’s tone tends to be “unsentimental in a way that is deeply Maine.”

“We may be feeling all kinds of emotion, but she’s not going there,” Baldyga added. “She’s not going to do it.”

While her name isn’t well known nationally despite considerable acclaim, Moore maintains a devoted following in Maine. The Bass Harbor Memorial Library hosts the Ruth Moore Days event each year in order to commemorate her life and continue to share her works.

Baldyga and Taintor, neither of whom is from Maine, are mindful of the author's many fans.

"The people who know her have such affection and such love for her, that it's a little daunting to be like, 'We're taking this beloved author who people have such strong feelings about and adapting her work,'" Taintor said. "One of the stories that we've adapted talks about the outlanders who come to their island, who [the islanders] resent coming there."

Every word in the production — spoken or sung — was originally written by Moore. The duo pared down the seven stories, but still left in more than just the dialogue. Keeping some narration, they said, helps keep the storytelling feel alive.

"She wanted her writing to sound like it was talk from one neighbor to another. And that's something that we really want to maintain," Baldyga said.

The production features an ensemble cast. Most of the actors are from away, but the group includes Blue Hill resident Summit Colman, a 2017 graduate of George Stevens Academy. Taintor and Baldyga plan to include local musicians in the show as well.

The pair emphasized the accessibility of the production for all audiences.

"You should be able to walk in with your neighbor who's a fisherman and your 7-year-old child and your grandmother," Taintor said. "It's not a show that locks anybody out."

Phippen expressed delight about the upcoming show, particularly at the prospect of exposing more audiences to Moore's work.

"I'm excited," he said. "I think that it's wonderful."

"I Have Seen Horizons: Ruth Moore's Stories from Maine" runs Aug. 16-26 at the Stonington Opera House. Tickets cost between \$25 and \$40 and can be purchased at operahousearts.org or by calling 367-2788.

 Bio

 Latest Posts

Jessica Piper

LOAD COMMENTS