

PRESS RELEASE
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When a widow rents a haunted house, with the ghost of a sea captain still feeling it's his home, it provides the story behind a classic romantic fantasy called "The Ghost and Mrs. Muir."

A new musical version of the ghostly tale opens at the Glendale Centre Theatre this weekend, with the script written by Crescenta Valley High graduate and frequent performer Carter Thomas, with music and lyrics written by his sister, Tracey.

The well-known movie about the tale starred Gene Tierney and Rex Harrison, followed by a TV version decades later. The movie focused on the romantic side of the tale, while the TV show, which ran for two seasons and starred Hope Lange and Charles Nelson Reilly, was more about the humor.

Thomas said his musical is more based on the book and he reset it in the 1940s, instead of book's much earlier setting.

"The '40s were a very romantic period in Hollywood. A lot of romantic movies were made then," he said.

Kara Gibson of Santa Clarita stars as Mrs. Muir, having played the Red Queen earlier this season in "Alice in Wonderland," also created by Thomas and his sister, at Glendale Centre Theatre.

Gibson has been in several area productions and recently played Dorothy Brock in a national tour of the musical "42nd Street."

Gibson said it's been exciting creating a role in a new musical.

"The cool part about that is that you have to be selective about the cast you choose because it's a much more collaborative effort, and Carter is awesome with that because he's open to input," she said.

She added that it takes a certain kind of writer "to not be so pridefully attached to your work," she added.

But the collaboration requires actors who are willing to speak up, she said.

"It's a huge exercise in trust," she said.

While the new musical is set in the 1940s, it's identifiable for today's audiences, Gibson said.

"It has themes that are very current, very modern day. It's a single mom who is trying to support a child, who is trying to get over the loss of a husband and grieving," she said.

The new show's impetus came from Glendale Centre Theatre's producer Brenda Dietlein, who wanted to produce a musical version of the classic romantic tale, and she approached Thomas.

After he read the book, Thomas said he saw potential for a new theatrical work and how to expand the story to attract modern audiences.

When Thomas, who is 19 years old, and his sister, who is 26, started working in the new work they made a significant decision.

"We wanted the script to do the storytelling and the songs to let the characters express their emotions," he said.

“It’s more of a play with music in it,” he added, so the music doesn’t necessarily further the plot.

Thomas has been in many productions at the local theater, including “A Christmas Carol,” in which he initially portrayed Tiny Tim in 2007 and has since played a variety of older male characters. He’s performed in “The King and I,” “Bye, Bye Birdie” and “Guys and Dolls.”

In an 11-month national tour of “Mary Poppins,” Thomas played Michael Banks, and he has also done a national tour as a singer with the Radio City Rockettes.

As for the future, Thomas said he’s looking to write and direct more.

“I love writing, and I love directing, and I love being creative and kind of getting to put my own twist on shows. And I think it’s nice to find a balance between what the audience is expecting and what they want to see and adding something fresh and new to it,” he said.

The Glendale Centre Theatre is located at 324 N. Orange St., Glendale.

For more information about “The Ghost and Mrs. Muir,” such as performance times and to buy tickets, call (818) 244-8481.