

NEWS RELEASE

October 20, 2009

FRED JONES JR. MUSEUM OF ART
UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA - NORMAN
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Live 1930s Comedy Hits OU Museum Stage Oct. 23

NORMAN, OKLA. – Before Oklahoma became a household name on Broadway, playwright Lynn Riggs debuted the comedy *Russet Mantle*. The University of Oklahoma School of Drama and the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art are teaming up to present a free staged reading of the 1936 comedy at 6 p.m. Friday, Oct. 23, at the museum.

Although Riggs is best known for his play *Green Grow the Lilacs*, which inspired the musical *Oklahoma!*, he was a prolific writer, and *Russet Mantle* was his first major success.

“The comedy is a satire of the moral, political and ethical dilemmas facing the youth of the 1930s, but its humor and appeal remains fresh,” said Eugene B. Adkins Curator Mark White. “Set in the artist and writer’s colony of Santa Fe, the play offers a humorous look at the bohemian behavior of American youth, especially in regards to politics and sex, and the older generation’s disapproval and disdain for such behavior.”

Under the direction of associate professor and graduate liaison Judith Pender, the School of Drama will stage a dramatic reading of the first act of the comedy in the museum’s Mary Eddy and Fred Jones Auditorium. The performance is free and open to the public.

Students from the OU drama department will portray the characters in the comedy, with Cass Wantland as Horace Kincaid, Jonathan Contreras as Pablo, Ashley Monroe as Susanna Kincaid, Margery Baker as Effie Rowley and Alexandra Gonzales as Manuelita. Katie Lloyd plays Kay Rowley, with Mitchell Reid as Scoot, Jamie Goldman as John Galt, Carly Risenhoover as Mrs. Fawcett and Celia Ross as Female Swing.

Riggs was born in 1899 near Claremore, Okla. An aspiring writer, he enrolled at OU in 1920. In 1923, he was encouraged to visit the Santa Fe art colony by resident poet Witter Bynner and OU art professor Oscar Jacobson. Riggs visited less than a year, but the city inspired a number of his works, including *Russet Mantle*. The play opened on Broadway on Jan. 16, 1936, and with 116 consecutive

performances, it was a critical and financial success that also launched the career of Burgess Meredith.

The staged performance coincides with a new exhibition at the museum that also explores the relationship between Oklahoma artists, including Jacobson, and New Mexico. *Sooners in the Land of Enchantment: Oklahoma Artists and New Mexico* opened Oct. 10 and remains on display through Jan. 3, 2010.

The Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art is located in the OU Arts District on the corner of Elm Avenue and Boyd Street, at 555 Elm Ave., on the OU Norman campus. The museum's Web site is www.ou.edu/fjjma. Information and accommodations on the basis of disability are available by calling (405) 325-4938.

Construction on a new wing is under way, but the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art is open and fully functional with exhibitions and programming throughout the entire construction process.

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