

# Film

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"It's the cow capital of South Dakota. It has golden corn fields. It sets the whole atmosphere and mood of the love story we're trying to tell between these two people. It felt like Yankton was the best place to shoot it."

Alliata is hesitant to give away too many details of the story. "It started over spring break of last year, when Amy, Julie (Amsberry of Yankton) and I were talking," she said. "We were thinking about a decision that a man has to make in a moment on a road. We had an image in our minds that inspired the rest of the story. We didn't know how we wanted it to play out, and then it kind of took the form of a re-told myth of Orpheus and Eurydice that felt the most natural to us."

In the Greek tale of Orpheus and Eurydice, Orpheus must have Charon, the ferryman of Hades, carry him across the rivers Styx and Acheron to the underworld so he can find his dead wife and bring her back to the land of the living.

The film has Will (played by Wuestewald) deciding whether to live his life without the namesake of the story, Emily (who is played by King), or to join her in the afterlife.

Alliata had worked with Wuestewald, a 2001 Yankton High School graduate who focuses on stage acting in Denver, on a previous short film project and wanted to work with him again. She also had King, a 2004 Yankton High School graduate who acts on the stage in Minneapolis, in mind when writing the role of Emily, despite never having worked with her previously.

King said she was flattered to have the role written for her.

Added Wuestewald, "Yana is a fantastic director. She caters to everybody on the set. I think some directors focus their energy in one direction at times. Yana seems to take care of every situation at the same time, and it's pretty impressive to watch. She makes sure everybody is doing their job, and she's also making sure that everybody is comfortable with what is happening."

What brought all this talent together? At one time or another, Miner taught each of them. During her time at Yankton Middle School, she instructed Wuestewald, King and other members of the film crew. And it was while teaching at La Pietra, the Hawaii School for Girls, that Miner met Hawaiian native Alliata.

"I know I'm the common denominator in the process (of their meeting), but what made this film is talent," Miner said. "From my perspective, it's cool to say, 'I know that one, that one and that one.' That's fun. But it would be quite a stretch of the imagination to think I have much of anything to do with their talent."

King and Wuestewald expressed admiration for Miner and a happiness to be working in their hometown.

"I think Amy has had such a big influence on all of us at different times in our lives," King said. "It's an honor to come back and do something with her and then to build a new creative environment with people. It's nice that it's at home and showcasing a little bit of our lovely landscape and bringing excitement to the town."

"There is something about working where you grew up," added Wuestewald. "I didn't imagine I would ever do it, but it's nice to do something here."

During the three-day shoot, filming was done at Avera Sacred Heart Hospital; the home of Miner's parents, Jim and Celia Miner; and along Chalkstone Road on the western edge of Yankton.

Part of the filming had to be done at

night, and rain Saturday evening delayed completion until the early hours of Sunday morning.

Other than that, Alliata said the shoot went smoothly.

"There are always technical difficulties, but the performances of the actors have not failed me once," she stated. "It's very comforting, and I feel like I have it too good. How did so many things fall into place so perfectly?"

More than a dozen people, many flown in from Los Angeles, assisted with the film. Funding for the project was assembled by Kickstarter, a website that provides a platform for artists, designers, filmmakers, musicians, journalists and other creative types to seek donations.

Now, Alliata is back in Los Angeles to edit the film, which must be complete by December.

Miner had more immediate concerns on her mind.

"We'll have my parent's house cleaned up before they get back from their trip to Europe!" she promised.

Those involved have found the film experience so far to be inspiring.

"I'm in the arts, and we all know that the arts in Yankton, in South Dakota and across the country have taken a hit, so it's really exciting to see people who are not learning, teaching or consider the arts as extracurricular," Miner said. "We lots of times think it is just some extra or fun, but these are people who are dedicated artists making a living and building their lives around the idea of art."

Alliata said she hopes to have a Yankton premiere of the film once it is finished. She also wants to work with Miner and Amsberry again on future film projects.

"I think Amy touches every single soul she comes in contact with. She has been a huge influence on my life," Alliata said. "There is such a great amount of trust. I feel like I am doing what I really want to do because of her."

# Maxwell

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But money is still the bottom line," she said. "And Hildegard has a lot to say about that."

Maxwell added that she has gone to great lengths to ensure Hildegard's story is presented as accurately as possible.

"I portray her through her own words," she said. "I went back through all the old sources — her letters, her books — and I tried to weave together a script to really give people a sense of who she was and what her message was."

Accompanying herself on authentic medieval instruments, Maxwell will perform seven of Hildegard's original songs.

"All the songs I sing are her songs, so it's very authentic," she said.

Detail is also given to the scenery, Maxwell said.

"I make sure all my props and my sets look authentic, so that when people see the show, they're back in the 12th century with me," she said.

Maxwell added that while historical accuracy is important, she also makes sure the performance isn't "too heavy."

"I keep some humor in it," she said. "I want people to enjoy themselves."

In addition to her stage performance, Maxwell will share slides and anecdotes in her presentation, "Finding Hildegard," at 7:15 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 26, in the Chapter Room at Sacred Heart Monastery.

"I take people with me on my journey of how I embodied this character, because you can't just read about somebody; you sort of have to crawl into their skin," she said. "You have to get in

touch with their soul, their spirit, their energy."

Maxwell will talk about her journey to Germany, where she visited several places Hildegard had once been.

"It was one of the most amazing things I ever did," she said.

Maxwell has performed on the stages of major orchestras including Chicago Symphony, Berlin Radio Orchestra, Cleveland and Toronto (Raymond Leppard conducting), and Seattle. Her operatic engagements include San Francisco (Placido Domingo conducting), Cincinnati Opera, Hungarian State Opera, Netherlands Opera (with Nicholas Harncourt), Strasbourg, Lyon, Toulouse, and recital halls across the United States and in 27 foreign countries.

She has also performed cabaret and one-woman shows in New York City and made her European cabaret debut in 2006 at the International Theater, Frankfurt, Germany.

As to why she chose to do a performance about Hildegard, Maxwell said she wasn't sure.

"I think she kind of picked me," Maxwell said. "One day I woke up and said, 'I think I need to write a play about Hildegard.' And it all just opened up."

Maxwell added that she has been extremely pleased with the results of her performances.

"I've been totally gratified by people's responses to this show," she said. "And it's not just me. It goes way beyond me — like God is using me as a vehicle to bring this wonderful person to the audience so that they can get to know her and be uplifted by her and be touched by her music. I'm very honored to be doing it."

This Benedictine Lecture performance is sponsored by Mount Marty College, Mother of God Monastery, Sacred Heart Monastery and the Benedictine Institute for Leadership, Ethics and Social Justice. It is free and open to the public.

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Ticket Sales Contact: Doug Johnson, 402-586-2266, email: doug.johnson@wausabank.com

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Reception following performance  
Event is free and open to the public

Wednesday, October 26, 7:15  
"Finding Hildegard"  
Maxwell speaks about Bingen, Germany and how she came to embrace Hildegard.  
Chapter Room - Sacred Heart Monastery

Sponsored by Mount Marty College, Mother of God Monastery, Sacred Heart Monastery and the Benedictine Institute for Leadership, Ethics, and Social Justice

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