

Ibsen's 'Enemy' at Theatricum

BY DARYL H. MILLER

The essentials: People in high places plot against a doctor who is about to reveal that the water at the local spa is contaminated, threatening the town's livelihood. Ellen Geer has freely adapted Henrik Ibsen's "An Enemy of the People" for Will Geer's Theatricum Botanicum, relocating the 1882 drama to South Carolina in 1980.

Why this? Ibsen, the father of realistic drama, was a questioner, and Geer, who is Theatricum's producing artistic director, admires his evenhandedness in this play. There are no clear good guys nor bad guys, she says, just "people trying to make a moral decision in a very complex time." To recontextualize the Norwegian master's drama for an American audience, Geer chose the year that launched the Reagan era, with all of the social and economic changes it set in motion. She also reenvisioned the doctor and his wife as a mixed-race couple in a place where state law, though unenforceable, still officially banned interracial marriage. As for safe water, current events — in Flint, Mich., California's Central Valley and elsewhere — have made the issue newly relevant.

Details: Will Geer's Theatricum Botanicum, 1419 N. Topanga Canyon Blvd., Topanga. Opens Saturday. In repertory various Fridays, Saturdays or Sundays through Sept. 28. \$10-\$42. (310) 455-3723, theatricum.com



IAN FLANDERS

KATHERINE Griffith, left, Earnestine Phillips and Christopher W. Jones in "An Enemy of the People."