



## She's got Bette Davis eyes

One-woman show chronicles life of the controversial screen queen

By Dottie Ashley  
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With her chestnut hair and her enormous blue eyes, Bette Davis was the first woman to play a leading role as a true villainess, a part for which she had to fight studio chief Jack Warner to land. The film, her 22nd, was "Of Human Bondage," and it paid off, earning her the title "Queen of Hollywood."



This year, Hollywood is all aglitter celebrating the 100th birthday of the two-time Academy Award-winning actress ("Dangerous," 1936, and "Jezebel," 1939). By not making her looks a priority, as in "Whatever Happened to Baby Jane," Davis greatly influenced such actresses as Susan Sarandon and Meryl Streep.

In a tribute to Davis, Hollywood actor-screenwriter Camilla Carr has written a one-woman show, "All About Bette: An Evening with Bette Davis," that opens tonight at the Footlight Players as part of the Piccolo Spoleto Festival.

Chronicling the turbulent life of the controversial actress, the play stars award-winning Dallas actress Morgana Shaw, and will be directed by Jac Alder.

Tony Award-winning producer Michael Jenkins, who has brought to the stage such Broadway hits as "Legally Blonde" and the 2008 Tony-nominated "Boeing Boeing," will view the Charleston production before firming up plans to take it to the Helen Hayes Theatre in New York.

**If you go**

**WHAT:** "All About Bette: An Evening with Bette Davis."

**WHERE:** Footlight Players Theatre, 20 Queen St.

**WHEN:** Tonight at 8 p.m.; May 29 at 4:30 p.m.; May 30 at 5:30 p.m.; May 31 at 8:30 p.m.; June 1, June 2 and June 4 at 6:45 p.m.

**HOW MUCH:** \$25.

"All About Bette" had a terrific run at a Dallas theater last summer, but it's been a rather bumpy road.

As Carr says, it took two years of research to define the tumultuous life of a lotus-land icon who married four times and had multiple affairs, including one with millionaire director Howard Hughes.

"I was intrigued by Bette Davis as an actress who knew, early on, that she simply couldn't make it on her beauty, and had to have sheer talent and a forceful personality to get the fame she craved," Carr says. "But I also learned from checking out Bette's file from 1931-1989 from The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences that her life was just as dramatic as any of her movies."

Her Texas accent still intact, the gregarious Carr said she found the modus operandi for Davis' life was established when she was a child and her father left the family, causing her mother to have to go out and find a job to support Davis and her sister, who was schizophrenic.



Camilla Carr

"This drove Bette to be a success and to never have to depend on a man again for money," Carr says. "This is probably one reason she had such terrible control issues, not only with her work, but also with the men in her life, causing her professional commitments to be overshadowed by her personal life."

The playwright says she hopes she has written "not only a riveting play, but an insight into the sacrifices that women, especially, often make to achieve what they want in a career."

A native of West Texas, Carr has spent the past 30 years in Los Angeles pursuing a diverse

career as a regular on the daytime series "Another World," and appearing on a Hollywood Hall of Fame-winning segment of "Designing Women," that was honored as the first prime time series to dramatize a story about AIDS. She has written seven motion pictures for television and a critically acclaimed novel "Topsy Dingo Wild Dog." She adapted the play "Last Summer at Bluefish Cove" for the screen with her former husband, two-time Academy Award-winning screenwriter Edward Anhalt, and has recently finished the screenplay for Thomas Mann's novella "The Black Swan."

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