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ARTS DEVO

by JASON CASSIDY • jasonc@newsreview.com



Have you heard about the painter, Vincent Van Gogh?/Who loved color and who let it show ... He loved, he loved, he loved life so bad/His paintings had twice the color other paintings had/So bad, so bad that the world had to know/The man loved color and he let it show.

—"Vincent van Gogh," by Jonathan Richman

VINCENT, THEO AND LOKI The basic outline of Vincent van Gogh's life is well-known: 19th century Dutch artist creates post-impressionist paintings in France, struggles with mental illness, cuts off his ear and eventually kills himself at the age of 37 having sold only one painting.

Van Gogh has become the quintessential example of the tortured artist, and for the "artist" part of that description, his narrative has of course flipped more dramatically than he could've ever imagined during his life. He's now widely regarded as one of the most influential artists of all time and his paintings today sell for upward of \$80 million.

But the "tortured" tag, while merited on many levels, is a bit dismissive when considering the man, and the need to fill in a little more of the color of van Gogh's life was at least part of the inspiration behind *Vincent*, a one-man play written by (and originally starring) the late *Star Trek* actor Leonard Nimoy.

This weekend, *Slow Theatre* is bringing the show to the **Chico Women's Club** for three performances (Sept. 5-7, 7 p.m.), and delivering the monologue will be one of Chico's most intriguing artists: **Loki Miller**.

The sole character in the play is Vincent's brother, **Theo**, who is speaking to the audience a week or so after his brother shot himself with the hope of setting the record straight about his life. The vehicle for his presentation, and the source material for the play, is a collection of 500-plus letters Vincent sent to Theo during his life, as well as the 100 or so Theo sent in return.

Most of the letters are held at the **Van Gogh Museum** in Amsterdam, and you can enter this "window to van Gogh's universe" at vangoghletters.org. They are full of revealing biographical details and beautiful words that illuminate the artist's vision, his connection to the world and the beings he encounters in it: "There's nothing more truly artistic than to love people."

In an online video promo for the play, director **Deanna Alexich** suggests there are some universal issues addressed in the work, drawing parallels between van Gogh being viewed as a madman and similar judgments made of those seen living on the streets today. "I think [the play is] an opportunity for us to go deeper than what we see," she says. "Start tapping into what we feel."

The show—which features **Olivia Cerullo** on keyboard accompaniment—also will serve as a going-away party of sorts for Miller, who leaves next week for a two-year conservatory program at **The American Academy of Dramatic Arts** in New York. Miller has been one of Chico's most prolific artists over the past decade. He's been both a fearless and intense actor with roles in nearly 100 plays/musicals (from **Hank Williams Sr.** in *The Lost Highway* at the **Blue Room** to multiple appearances in *Shakespeare in the Park*), and one of the busiest musicians in town—playing guitar and singing in multiple solo, duo and group cover acts, and adding his incendiary guitar leads as a sideman for many local projects (**Danny Cohen's Near Death Experience**, **Black Fong**, **Uncle Dad's Art Collective**, etc.). Visit slowtheatre.weebly.com to purchase tickets and help give a local son a proper send-off.



"The Painter on His Way to Work,"
Vincent van Gogh



The actor on his way to New York