

FALL 2009

Creative Living

MEASURING EXCELLENCE



Plus:

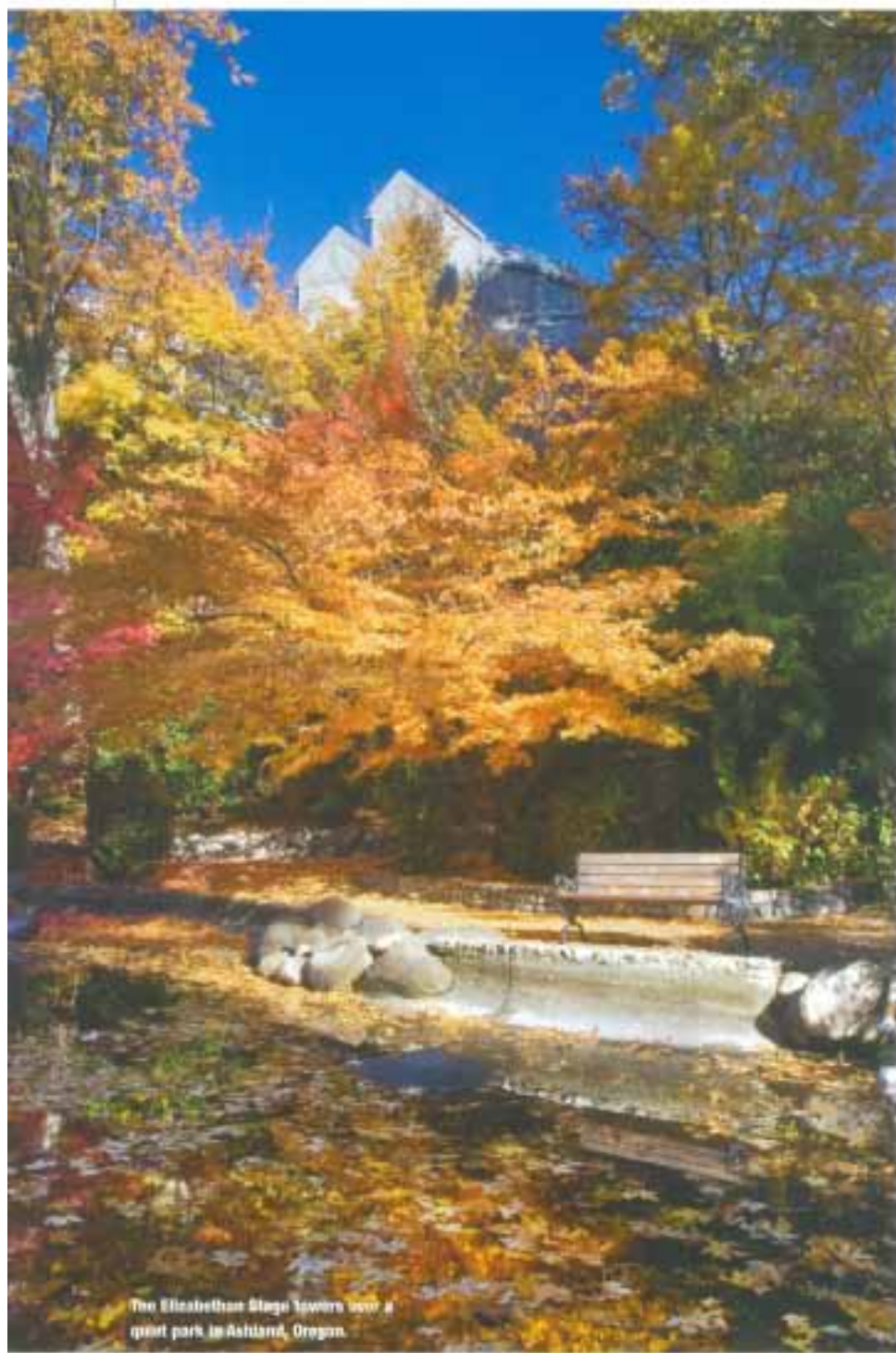
Grammar is back!

Are you ready
for a long life?



Northwestern Mutual

Gone to Oregon



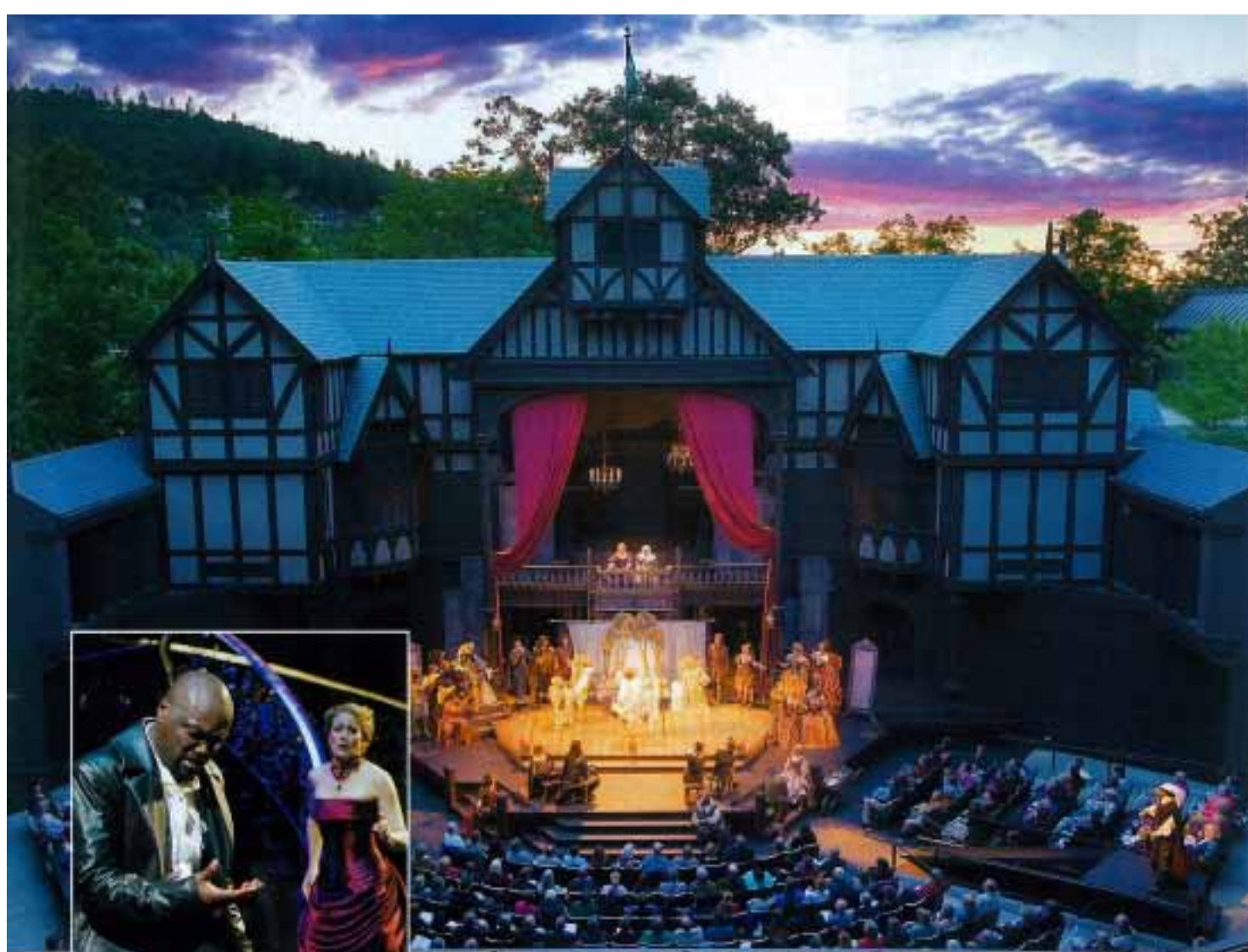
The Elizabethan Stage towers over a quiet park in Ashland, Oregon.

“There’s the Rogue Valley,” my friend Erin said, pointing to the vista below. We were atop Grizzly Peak, a 5,900-foot-high mountain near Ashland, Oregon, celebrating the end of our hike up a trail surrounded by windblown pines, green scrub dotted with purple wildflowers, and clean, clean air.

“My bike route’s over there,” she noted, pointing diagonally toward a winding road that curves around lakes, along an old railway, through vineyards and herds of cows grazing on grassy slopes. “I guess it’d be an understatement to say I’m not in New York anymore.”

Erin left behind her life in Brooklyn and moved to Southern Oregon in summer 2008 so she could spend more time with her retired mother and extended family—and I was one of her first guests who knew her from our time in New York. Gone were the long commutes to work, dirty sidewalks and honking horns, the headache of subway delays, a cramped apartment, and not enough time in a day.

It was great to see her tan, toned, and cheerful—enjoying the outdoors, participating in the region’s creative community, and finding new hours in the day for the running, biking, and hiking she enjoyed when she wasn’t teaching. As she catalogued all the things she appreciated about living in a smaller and more natural foothills setting—the easy pace, proximity to lakes and mountains, summer theater and music, year-round outdoor access—I was reminded of my own



During the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Lady Macbeth exhorts her husband (left). The open-air theater seats 1,200 people (above). Nearby, the Plaza offers visitors a variety of shops to browse (below).

move from New York to Seattle years earlier, and the pleasurable discoveries that downshifting allows, whether you're at midlife and getting a first breath of moderation or hitting retirement and learning to relax.

The view from Grizzly Peak was a perfect overview for the next day's agenda in downtown Ashland. We started out near the city's center, known as The Plaza, making sure to sip salty Lithia Springs water from a bank of fountains, and made our way through Lithia Park, a 93-acre historic park designed in the tradition of Frederick Law Olmsted and replete with ornate stonework, tall trees, and landscaping that showcases Ashland

Creek. Nearby, we secured tickets for *Macbeth*, one of several plays running during the town's nationally known Oregon Shakespeare Festival held annually in summer. We stopped to lounge in the lobby of Ashland Springs Hotel, one of a handful of boutique, historic hotels in town that reflect the old grandeur of Oregon's railroad and logging history.

Erin's favorite area of the city is Ashland's restored railroad district, where shops and restaurants with charming architecture flank the now-defunct century-old rail line. A trail that connects to the 21-mile Bear Creek Greenway, a path for pedestrians and cyclists linking Ashland and





Old-fashioned comfort fills the Peerless Hotel, built as a boarding house in 1900.

the town of Central Point, runs alongside the former tracks. We lined up with lithe bikers for organic joe at Noble Coffee Roasting before touring the historic Peerless Hotel, hitting the craft shops, and lunching al fresco on all-organic salads and house-made charcuterie at Palace Café.

Sore from our hike, we visited Chozu Bath and Tea Gardens, where Japanese hot and cold pools and steam and dry saunas rejuvenated us for our evening. Rather than dine as planned at Chateaulin, an Ashland pre-theater favorite for authentic

French, we opted to visit the restaurant's next-door wine shop for picnic provisions.

As we toasted our day in Lithia Park, our vista was far different from Grizzly Peak's: Theatergoers bustled past, eager for that night's shows. The play's the thing, Shakespeare wrote. But if you ask me, in Ashland, play is the thing—and it's worth a standing ovation.

Jane Hodges is a freelance writer in Seattle. Her travel pieces have appeared in The New York Times and Southwest Airlines' Spirit Magazine.

Visitors can sit down for a sumptuous afternoon tea at the Ashland Springs Hotel.



WHEN YOU GO...

Stroll in Lithia Park:

59 Winburn Way
Ashland, OR 97520
www.nps.gov/nr/travel/ashland/lt.htm

Dine at Chateaulin Restaurant:

50-52 E. Main St.
Ashland, OR 97520
541-482-2264
www.chateaulin.com

See a Shakespeare play:

Oregon Shakespeare Festival
15 S. Pioneer St.
Ashland, OR 97520
541-482-4331
www.osfashland.org

Sleep historic:

Ashland Springs Hotel
212 E. Main St.
Ashland, OR 97520
888-795-4545
www.ashlandsspringshotel.com

The Peerless Hotel:

243 Fourth St.
Ashland, OR 97520
800-460-8758
www.peerlesshotel.com