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UPDATE BOB FORD - Playwright/instructor wins Porter Fund Literary Prize

By [Rich Polikoff](#)

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FAYETTEVILLE — A great writer wins the Porter Fund Literary Prize every year, but it's rarely for writing plays.

In fact, in the 26-year history of the prize, Bob Ford (Northwest Arkansas Profile, Nov. 9, 2003) is just the second playwright to win the award, which is presented annually to an Arkansas writer with a substantial body of work. Werner Trieschmann (1994), a longtime friend of Ford's, is the only previous playwright to win it.

Ford will be honored April 10 in Little Rock at the Darragh Center of Central Arkansas Library System's Main Library. The event, which is free to the public, is part of the Arkansas Literary Festival.

"It's sort of a shot in the arm for playwrights and theater practitioners in Arkansas to be recognized in the same vein as these great novelists and nonfiction writers like Roy Reed and Donald Harington, not to mention poets like Miller Williams," Ford says. "It's good for the playwriting profession to be recognized among the literary arts."

If the award were given in a major metropolitan area like New York or Chicago, Ford says, it would go to playwrights more often. Those cities are epicenters of theater, while playwrights tend to be fewer in places like Arkansas.

That said, he doesn't wish he lived in an urban area. Ford loves Fayetteville, where he has lived for more than a decade.

He is the artistic director of TheatreSquared, which he helped found in 2006.

"I love cities and the urban environment," Ford says. "I miss it, but I don't miss it enough to trade away everything we've done here. Starting a professional theater company, that never would have happened in New York.

"One of the great things about Arkansas is it's still kind of a new frontier. You can really make a difference, and that feels great, bringing forward a company to Fayetteville and Northwest Arkansas. It feels like you're taking control of some of the levers of your art."

In addition to his position at TheatreSquared, Ford is a visiting assistant professor in the drama department at the University of Arkansas. He teaches acting, dramatic literature and a general introductory course in drama for majors and nonmajors.

"I absolutely love it," says Ford, who is working on his second novel, this one set in late 18th-century New York. "It's been sort of a personal renaissance. It reminds me of what drew me to theater to begin with."

Ford and his wife, actress/ UA drama professor Amy Herzberg, have been married since 2000.

GOALS AND TOLLS

2 The number of playwrights to win the Porter Fund Literary Prize in the 26-year history of the prize.

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