

Clark alum brings play to campus

Steve Coker has gone from former Clark College student to playwright, and now his alma mater is staging his farcical romantic comedy "Looking for Olivia" for its fall production. His one-time student adviser, **Dan Anderson**, is directing.

Coker, who attended Clark College from 1987 to '89 and now lives in St. Helens, Ore., credits Anderson with getting him involved in theater.



Steve Coker

Coker wrote and directed an adaptation of **Franz Kafka's** "The Trial" when he was a student at Clark College. This will be the first time the theater department has performed one of his plays since then.

Coker started writing "Looking for Olivia" 10 years ago. It centers around Henry, a struggling writer who meets a woman named Olivia who's trying to break free from her controlling parents. In helping Olivia, Henry winds up with writing material and a possible love interest.

"Looking for Olivia" was nominated as best play and best screenplay at the Swansea Bay International Film Festival in Wales and won third place in the Dylan Thomas Centre's Play Offs. It has been produced once in Portland, but since then, Coker has reworked the play with a different ending and some new characters.

Coker, 41, who directed the show last time, said he looks forward to seeing what Anderson brings to it when the show opens Friday. One difference is that Anderson, seizing upon a reference to a phone cord, has set it in the 1980s instead of the present.

Coker's return to Clark College will continue beyond "Looking for Olivia's" run. He's been cast as Max Bialystock in the college's upcoming production of "The Producers" and is writing a children's play for the theatre department.

"It's like coming home," Coker said.