

A festival by any other name is not Ashland's

By Jonathan Allen
Oregon Daily Emerald

It's hard to believe that the Oregon Shakespeare Festival can get any better. But with the announcement of long-time festival supporter Paul Allen's Foundation for the Arts \$6 million donation, the future is even brighter for the theatrical pride of the Northwest.

"Our goal in offering the lead gift was to serve as a catalyst encouraging additional support," Jo Allen Patten, executive director of the foundation said Friday in a press release. "The Festival is a tremendous asset to our region and we are proud to support its efforts."

Highlighted by three beautiful theaters, an eight-month season of 11 plays — four by Shakespeare — and 450 theater professionals from around the country, the Festival has grown into a performing arts paradise that reached a total attendance of 374,246 in 1999.

The Festival has been a virtual mecca for performing arts lovers since the late 19th century when the Chautauqua movement began bringing entertainment to rural areas of the country. The movement died out in the early 1920s, but it firmly planted the roots for a first-class festival that with the Allen family's donation is poised to launch well into the 21st century.

Since its official beginning on July 2, 1935, with a production of "Twelfth Night," the Festival has delighted theater-goers with a strong foundation of historic stages and professional actors.

The Festival has the oldest existing full-scale Elizabethan stage in the Western Hemisphere, which was built on the same site and is still surrounded by the ivy covered walls of an old Chau-

tauqua theater established in 1893. Two smaller theaters, the Angus Bowmer Theatre and the Black Swan, house indoor events and plays by eight different creators besides Shakespeare.

But the outdoor season began June 16, and that means the Elizabethan Theatre and the bard of all bards will take center stage everyday except Monday from now until October.

The three plays performed in the outdoor, 1,200-seat Elizabethan Theatre this year are "Hamlet," "Twelfth Night" and "The Taming of the Shrew." "Henry V," which is put on in the Angus Bowmer Theatre, is the only Shakespearean play not in the outdoor theater.

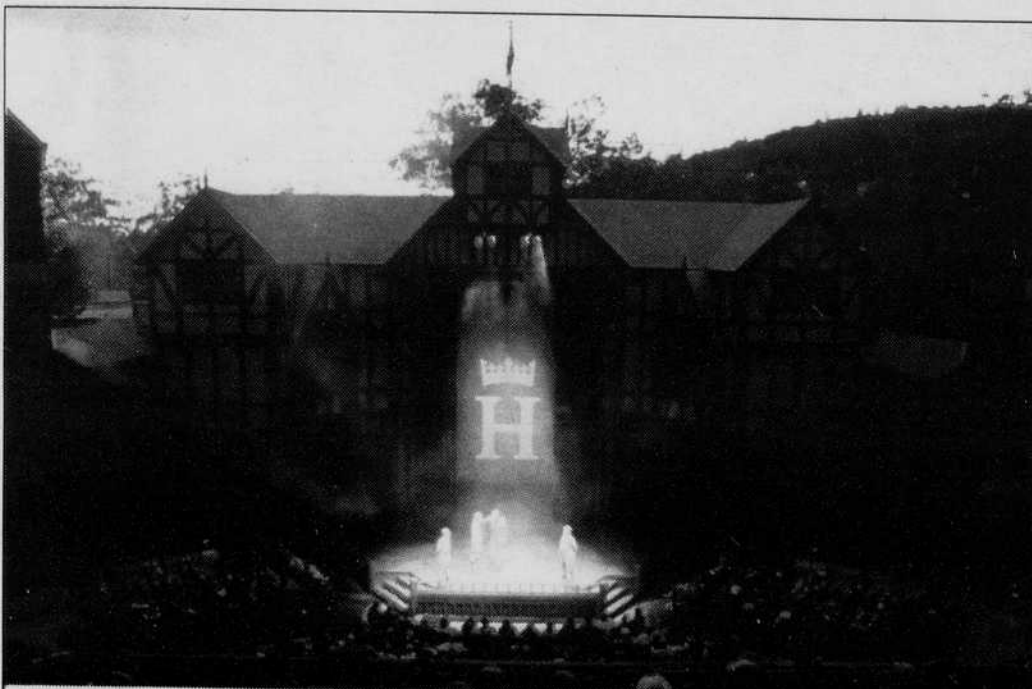
For Shakespeare fanatics, seeing his plays performed live is an opportunity too good to pass up.

"It was gratifying to actually see these plays I have been reading performed live," said Marie Veverka, a 22-year-old English major at the University who traveled to the Festival as part of a class. "Seeing a movie about one of the plays is nothing compared to actually seeing one on stage."

While Shakespeare's stage and the two smaller ones provide a historic feel that only the Festival can offer, the real stars of the show are the actors. The more than 400 theater professionals that grace these stages for eight months a year bring the written word of nine different playwrights to life in a live setting that should not be missed.

"I think it is important to see these plays performed in the medium they were designed for," Veverka said. "Shakespeare did not write these plays to be read. He wrote them to be watched."

Some of the other plays include



The Elizabethan Theatre is home to Shakespeare's 'Hamlet,' 'Twelfth Night' and 'The Taming of the Shrew' this summer. Photo Courtesy Jennifer Donahoe/Oregon Shakespeare Festival

"The Trojan Women" by Euripides, "The Night of the Iguana" by Tennessee Williams and "Force of Nature" by Steven Dietz.

Another interesting note to this year's festival is that the Black Swan's 23-year reign at the Festival will soon be coming to a close. According to Media Associate Robert Hackett, a capital campaign designed to raise \$20 million — which the Allen family's donation propelled to a flying start — will go in part toward building a new theater to replace the Black Swan.

For more information on times of shows, tickets prices and ways to support the Festival, check out its Web site at www.orshakes.org.

Summer at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival

The Elizabethan Theatre

Hamlet by William Shakespeare, June 6 - Oct 7
Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare, June 7 - Oct 8
The Taming of the Shrew by William Shakespeare, June 8 - Oct 6

Angus Bowmer Theatre

Henry V by William Shakespeare, Feb 18 - Oct 29
The Man Who Came to Dinner by Moss Hart, George Kaufman, Feb 20 - Oct 28
The Night of the Iguana by Tennessee Williams, Feb 19 - July 9, Sep 19 - Oct 29
The Trojan Women by Euripides, July 26 - Oct 28

The Black Swan

Wit by Margaret Edson, Feb 24 - June 24
Crumbs from the Table of Joy by Lynn Nottage, Mar 29 - Oct 29
Stop Kiss by Diana Son, July 4 - Oct 29

source: www.orshakes.org

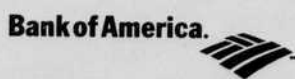
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