

**T**he snappy, tap-happy musical hit *Crazy for You* continues at the Portland Civic Auditorium with evening and matinee performances through Oct. 23. The infectious rewrite of George and Ira Gershwin's 1930s *Girl Crazy* features top performances, a dozen hits from the original show and other sources, a chorus line of scantily clad chorines and a rousing men's chorus straight out of the old west. It's musical escapism at its best!

## Theater

The touring edition of *Crazy for You*, a smash hit on Broadway and in London, opens the first Portland Center for the Performing Arts Broadway Series. The award-winning *Will Rogers Follies* arrives next, for a Nov. 15-20 stay. Other shows in the series include *The Sound of Music*, *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Hello, Dolly!* with Carol Channing recreating her Tony Award-winning title role in a 30th anniversary international tour.

Through the convoluted manner of Broadway tours, your faithful *Just Out* scribe has seen four of the actual touring companies before they reach Portland, allowing a rare opportunity to preview specific performances. There's no doubt that Dan Bean Presents, the producing organization for the new PCPA, has collected five winners for this first year in Portland. Each and every show is an unqualified hit that gives full value for series or single-ticket buyers. All five shows won the Tony Award for Best Musical of their respective years.

**O**ff-stage-husband-and-wife team Kirby Ward and Beverly Ward headline *Crazy for You*. While their names may be unfamiliar, both have tremendous stage power. Kirby Ward is a rubber-faced, rubber-legged, vaudeville-style hooper in the Ray Bolger/Dick Van Dyke style. As the only woman in a sleepy Nevada mining town of 157 men, Beverly Ward gets to play tough, turn gentle, and get her man on her own terms. Top talent provides support in the show's many secondary roles, and both the men's and women's chorus and dancers are knockout professionals.

The show opens with a Ziegfeld-style production number in rehearsal. Soon, an endless line of chorus girls—dressed as pink bonbons—come cascading out of an onstage limousine, and the fun is underway.

The vaudeville traditions of Broadway give *Crazy for You* a nonstop series of old, old jokes that clearly delight the audience. "I didn't come here to be insulted," one character steams. "Oh, where do you normally go?" comes the age-old reply. *Crazy for You* isn't great literature, but it is great musical comedy.

**T**he Nov. 15-20 run of *Will Rogers Follies: A Life in Revue* gives Portland audiences their first look at the 1991 Tony Award-winning musical that's part Ziegfeld Follies and part biography of the beloved humorist—himself a star for Ziegfeld. Like *Crazy for You*, *Will Rogers Follies* salutes show business. Tommy Tune's incredibly creative direction elevates the material

above its source. *Will Rogers* is at its best when it pulls out the stops in production numbers or when it puts the title character stage center for a series of rambling, topical, semi-political observations. This *Will Rogers* is alive and well—he's telling the tale of his life and death from today's perspective. Expect topical one-liners and drawn-from-the-headlines discussions. Clinton, local politics, Lake Oswego and state concerns will all show up.

The original score serves the show well, but gives the cast no real hits. "I Never Met a Man I Didn't Like" and "Give a Man Enough Rope" provide the title character with two likeable numbers. A classic blues ballad, "No Man Left for Me," gives Rogers' wife a late-in-the-evening show stopper that gives the musical a welcome boost.

Tommy Tune's award-winning direction and choreography is based on unexpected vaudeville

James Hammerstein, son of the show's lyricist—is bright and bubbly without slipping over the line into too much sentimentality. The glorious score still tugs at the heartstrings: The title song, "My Favorite Things," "Do-Re-Mi," "Sixteen Going on Seventeen," "Edelweiss," and, of course, "Climb Every Mountain" make this touring edition like a visit from an old friend.

Osmond is a joy in her stage debut as Maria, the postulant sent by the Mother Superior to be a summer governess to the gloomy children of Captain Von Trapp. She finds that love can exist outside the abbey, and that her joy in life—and music—can return to the children the loving father they once had. The show needs no introduction to most theater fans, but Portland stage buffs will be happy to know that this mounting is first class in every department. Laurence Guittard opened the



PHOTO BY NEAL PRESTON

## A ROUND OF MUSIC

*A Portland premiere and some seasoned crowd pleasers hit the Portland boards*

by Christopher Kamera

Marie Osmond, as the singing would-be nun, and Laurence Guittard, as the embittered captain

hi-jinks. Straw hats turn into tambourines, a series of white stairs turn into glow-in-the-dark neon platforms. The chorus line does a quick turn to reveal near nudity that at first shocks the audience. Then, with reoccurring turns, it's obvious that the entire backside of the chorus line is a series of sheer body tights with picture-perfect foam padding that creates an unforgettable impression.

"Razzle-dazzle in the Ziegfeld tradition," reads one ad for the *Follies*. And, in all truth, that's what it is.

**M**arie Osmond headlines the touring edition of Rogers and Hammerstein's beloved *The Sound of Music*, arriving for a Jan. 31-Feb. 5 run. An unexpected delight, the revival is a perfect stage vehicle for the former television and recording star. The national tour—directed by

national tour as Captain Von Trapp, and Neal Benari assumed the role this summer. No specific casting for the captain has been announced, but since the show belongs to Maria and the children, local audiences will have few concerns.

**T**heodore Bikel headlines the touring company of *Fiddler on the Roof*, which plays April 11-16. Bikel, the original captain in the Broadway production of *The Sound of Music*, has played the role of Teyve in *Fiddler* more than 1,000 times. Like *The Sound of Music*, *Fiddler* is a Broadway and film classic that needs little introduction. Songs like "Sunrise, Sunset," "If I Were a Rich Man," "Tradition," "Matchmaker, Matchmaker," and the title song bring back the glory of the musical stage.

Teyve, the Russian dairyman, and his wife and

five daughters give *Fiddler* its plot, but the show's plea for tolerance and diversity give it its heart. While this mounting was unavailable for preview, there's no doubt that this *Fiddler* will delight local audiences.

**C**limaxing the PCPA series is the Carol Channing 30th anniversary tour of *Hello, Dolly!* The international tour opened in Denver this summer, played Vancouver, B.C., a stop later, and returns to the Pacific Northwest for an Aug. 1-6 stay at the Civic Auditorium before heading for New York. Channing, now 74 years old, gives an incredible performance that makes Broadway history. She's currently recognized as the oldest performer to revive her own performance for a Broadway engagement.


*Dolly* is clearly one of the best musical comedies ever written. The title character dominates the show, but supporting characters all have great scenes—and great songs—giving the show a non-stop energy that is missing in many of today's musicals.

*Hello, Dolly!* won a record-setting 10 Tony Awards 30 years ago—and it is likely to pick up a few for Best Revival and for several supporting roles when it reaches Broadway next fall. While Channing gives a legend-making performance, the whole show is a treat. Gower Champion's original direction and choreography is staged with a few polished updates, and the original sets and costumes are recreated. Every detail is a loving tribute to the original staging.

Channing stops the show with almost every appearance. From the opening "Call on Dolly," Channing moves forward with polish and grip. "Dancing," "Before the Parade Passes By" and, of course, the classic title song come alive with Channing on stage. Ever the consummate theater professional, Channing played Dolly Levi for 1,273 consecutive performances on Broadway and on tour—and never missed a show. Counting earlier productions, Channing has played Dolly more than 3,000 times. With almost no adjustments for age, Channing simply plays the matchmaker as an elderly widow looking for a final match. In the title number, she whips around the runway that surrounds the orchestra much like she did 30 years ago. On her return to stage, a waiter in the restaurant scene escorts her back across the stage for another runway strut. It's a remarkable performance in a remarkable role.

Like *The Sound of Music* and *Fiddler*, this *Hello, Dolly!* will entertain theater fans of all ages. Dan Bean Presents will offer a three-show series for the spring and summer titles. A four-show ticket starts with *Will Rogers*; both miniseries offer discounts. At press time, good seating for *Crazy for You* was still available for all performances. The miniseries include free parking—a great bonus for series pass holders. Complete details at Ticketmaster 224-4400.

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