

A STITCH IN TIME

Pioneer women overcome obstacles in Cottage Theatre's musical *Quilters*

From the moment you take your seat at Cottage Theatre, waiting for the lights to dim, *Quilters* transports you into a quaint, home-lovin' kind of feeling. Opening with old-time music with a heck of a lotta twang, the women of the musical burst in running and laughing — yee-haws and all — giving you a slight pause to ask: "What have I gotten myself into?"

Set in the early 1800s in the midst of European immigrants trailblazing across the vast expanse of the United States, *Quilters* — directed by Eliza Roaring Springs — focuses on pioneer women's history and, well, quilts.

The musical begins when Sarah, the 75-year-old mother (played by Springs), announces to her eight daughters that she's beginning a new, and final, quilt before she passes away. From that point on, we're taken through a multitude of stories that flow like a needle skating through cloth.

You're strung through lighthearted tales of child's play with quilts; at one point, one of the daughters (played by Amber Brower) flashes back to the time, in an act of youthful vengeance, she turned the ever-cherished Sun Bonnet Sue quilting pattern into "The Demise of Sun Bonnet Sue."

A thin thread of storyline, difficult to follow at times, eventually tucks you under layers of quilting, exposing the immense cultural riches the craft had for these women in all stages of their lives — in ways big and small, sometimes oddly shaped, and stitched across generations.

The women take you into the blunt reality of their hardships and how quilts played a necessary role in

THE CAST OF COTTAGE THEATRE'S *QUILTERS*



overcoming the harshest of obstacles. Whether women were being forced into oppressive roles, facing losses of loved ones and children or standing in the face of devastating natural disaster, the quilts were always there.

The play, written by Molly Newman and Barbara Damashek, leaves out more than a handful of major details of the period, such as the racial dynamics of the era. And yet, despite its extremely limited gaze on this chunk of

history, it also opens up the experiences of the women who were a part of it and who created and transmitted an enormous amount of culture that is slowly being lost.

For a history lesson and an awkwardly wonderful afternoon learning about quilts, *Quilters* does its job and then some.

Quilters runs through Aug. 30 at the Cottage Theatre in Cottage Grove; \$19-\$24.

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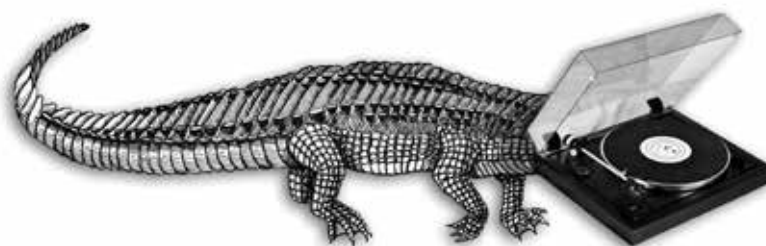
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