



Full cast photo from the 1992 holiday production of 'Fiddler On The Roof'

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"nostalgic event" to celebrate the last five decades at the theater. He hopes to bring in volunteers and actors from the early years at the Coaster to talk about their experiences and reflect on fond memories.

### History of the Coaster

The Coaster Theatre opened its doors 1972 after Clark, a Portland patron of the arts, purchased the old Coaster roller rink and remodeled it into a playhouse.

The theater hosted the Portland State University Summer Stock Company and other area performing arts groups over the summer. However, it was best known locally for its community productions of Charles Dickens plays during the holiday season. Community members would come together to script their own production, usu-

ally based around Dickens' "A Christmas Carol."

"Literally, it was families and dogs. It was anybody who wanted to be in the play was in the play," Tronier said. "It was a really cool community thing."

In 1985 the Coaster switched to a year-round production schedule, pulling talent from Cannon Beach, Astoria and other surrounding communities. Now, almost all of the actors, stage crew, ushers and other volunteers hail from towns on the North Oregon Coast. Clark continued to support the theater until his death in 2001, at which point the Coaster became a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. It continues to receive financial support from the Clark Foundation.

"The Clark family still is a part of the Coaster Theatre, which is really nice, because they have that familial connection," Tronier said.

With the exception of the last two years, the theater has grown to produce seven shows per year, along with hosting other opportunities for the community to get involved with the arts, such as a summer children's theater or concerts. It is often recognized by theater professionals as one of the premier community theaters in Oregon.

"The extensive effort that is put into doing great sets and having the community all involved means it just isn't a typical community theater. It's a step above," said Cathey Ryan, board president. "The fact that we have been around for 50 years really says a lot about the energy that's put into it, the connection with the community."

### Returning after COVID

During the last two years, productions at the Coaster have scaled back due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The theater produced

a radio play for the 2020 holidays, and brought just two shows to stage in 2021. "We are just excited to be having a season at this point," Tronier said of the 50th anniversary. "That is, in a sense, a huge milestone for us in our COVID world."

The theater has implemented a COVID policy to keep actors, volunteers and audiences safe. That policy requires all cast and crew members to be fully vaccinated and for audiences to wear masks at all times in the theater. Despite those changes, most members of the theater agree that it feels great to get back on stage with a near-full season of six shows.

I think it's going to be a lot more open as the season goes on. That's what I'm hoping," Jagodnik said. "And that will make (the 50th anniversary) really significant, if people can start coming to the theater on a regular basis again."