

CULTURE

Pippi Longstocking



Enjoy a celebration of every child's dream of independence! Drammy-award winning Oregon Children's Theatre (OCT) presents **Pippi Longstocking** at Portland Civic Auditorium on Sunday, January 17 and 24. This professional live stage production is based on **Pippi Longstocking** and **Pippi Goes on Board**, two books by internationally acclaimed children's author Astrid Lindgren.

The setting is Villa Villekulla, a quiet Swedish village. A nine-year-old red-head named Pippilotta Delicatessa Windowshade Mackrelmint Ephraim's Daughter has moved into a ramshackled house and lives alone... except for her pet monkey and horse (for this production, Pippi's monkey and horse have been specially designed by puppet master Mary Harrison). Pippi immediately makes friends with neighborhood children, but the adults in the town don't understand her lifestyle and the Child Welfare Board believes she must be "tamed". Her uproarious Tom Sawyerish adventures create booth

confusion and merriment in Villa Villekulla, as our young heroine lives up to her reputation as a free spirit.

Stan Foote directs **Pippi Longstocking** after receiving a Drammy Award for Best Director (Musical) of Oregon Children's Theatre's 1996 production of *Stuart Little*. Foote has directed in the Portland area for nearly 20 years for Oregon Children's Theatre, Lakewood Theatre Company, Artists Repertory Theatre and Triangle Productions. On December 1, Foote joined Oregon Children's Theatre as its new Director of Education.

Laura Smith will star as Pippi Longstocking. Smith most recently played the role of Christopher Robin for Triangle Productions' *Winnie the Pooh* and is a current member of Brainwaves Improvisational Comedy. Pippi's neighborhood friends, Annika and Tommy, will be played by Aimee Ankeny and Hunter Brier-Roeschlaub.

Public performances of **Pippi Longstocking** will be held at Portland Civic Auditorium on Sunday, January

17, at 2 PM and on Sunday, January 24, at 2 and 5 PM. Reserved seats are \$16, \$13 & \$11 for adults and \$12, \$10 & \$8 for children and seniors. Tickets are available by calling OCT's box office at 503/228-9571 or Ticketmaster outlets at 503/790-ARTS (2787). The production runs one hour and is appropriate for adults and children four years of age and older. Group discounts available. The sign interpreted performance will be on January 17 at 2 PM. Special services for disabled patrons available on request.

Oregon Children's Theatre is a non-profit professional theatre company celebrating its 11th season of presenting quality stage quality adaptations of the best in children's literature. A large percentage of Oregon Children's Theatre's audience is made up of school groups who attend week-day performances at Portland Civic Auditorium. Oregon Children's Theatre expects a combined school and family audience for *Pippi Longstocking* of more than 40,000.

The Magic Fire

Time magazine writer Richard Zoglin has chosen the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's (OSF) production of Lillian Garrett-Groag's **The Magic Fire** as one of his top ten theatre picks in his recent 1998 wrap-up of *The Best of Theater*. Zoglin attended *The Magic Fire* during its five-week run at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., from Nov. 12 - Dec. 6. Zoglin said OSF's production "combines warm family comedy and savvy political melodrama with rare skill."

The Magic Fire, directed by OSF Artistic Director Libby Appel, stands in excellent company, included with such theatrical productions as Martin McDonough's *The Quenn of Leenane*, Tennessee Williams' *Not About Nightingales*, and Margaret Edson's *Wit*.

"This is a real tribute to our company as a whole," said Appel. "From our commissioning of the play in 1993 to its stunning Kennedy Center opening in November, it's been an extraordinary journey developing this beautiful play. The combination of one of the finest acting companies in the country with a play of world-class merit has created a great moment in

OSF's already esteemed history."

The Oregon Shakespeare Festival launched its five-week run of **The Magic Fire** at the Kennedy Center on November 12 with an opening night for the record books. "It's the best opening we've ever had for a new play," remarked Ann Stock, Kennedy Center Vice President for Institutional Affairs. The Washington, D.C. audience, known for its restraint, gave the ensemble cast of the new play a resounding standing ovation. Zoglin and other reviewers agreed. The Washington Post called the production "searingly powerful," and The Washington Times gave it three and a half stars, describing the show as "a must see for the serious theater lover."

Immediately on their return to Oregon, cast, designers, and crew began work on OSF's 1999 season. "Our 1998 season produced the highest gross revenue in our history," commented Festival Executive Director Paul Nicholson, "and 1999 is looking very strong, with *Othello*, *The Three Musketeers* and *Pericles* already drawing international attention." Another trip to the Kennedy Center? "Quite possi-



The cast of the production of Lillian Garrett-Groag's **The Magic Fire** gathers around the family radio.

bly," said Nicholson, "the Kennedy Center has already started talking with us."

The Magic Fire was commissioned by the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in 1993 and was included in the Festival's play reading series in 1995. In 1996, the Festival and playwright Lillian Garrett-Groag were awarded major grants from the Kennedy Center Fund for New American Plays to produce **The Magic Fire**.

For more information, contact Amy Richard or Bob Hackett at (541) 482-6811.

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*Note: Orchestra does not perform at this show.

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