



PHOTO BY JENNY GRAHAM, OREGON SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

Tanis Parenteau (left) and Rainbow Dickerson star in "Manahatta," one of the summer and fall attractions at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, a play that moves between time periods to explore and give a voice to the exploitation and colonization faced by Native Americans.

OPINIONATED JUDGE
BY **DARLEEN ORTEGA**



Rare Perspectives on Stage

It is no exaggeration to say that three plays currently on offer at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland are making space for authentic, rarely-heard perspectives, and are changing the landscape of the American theater.

"Manahatta," the astonishing work of Cherokee playwright Mary Kathryn Nagle, takes place in three settings and two time periods. A few years before the 2008 financial crisis, a Lenape woman, Jane Snake, arrives on Wall Street -- to Manahatta, the very land her ancestors were forced to leave in the 1600s. She has taken a job in a prestigious investment bank and is fighting for credibility and opportunities to demonstrate her skills, but in a place where she is not seen or expected to rise. Meanwhile, her family is facing personal and financial troubles back in Oklahoma that eventually lead her mother to take out a mortgage loan that will jeopardize the family home. Finally, much of the play involves Lenape people in Manahatta encountering Dutch settlers for the first time, leading to a series of failures of communication with disastrous consequences for the Lenape people.

Staging these three stories together is a feat of theatrical genius, performed by a talented cast under the facile direction of Laurie Woolery. All seven cast members move between time periods, with subtle but clear shifts of costume, movement, and tone, and Nagle (herself an attorney who

formerly worked in Manhattan) has found resonant parallels between the economic pressures driving events in all three stories and the patterns of exploitation and colonization that recur again and again. In this play -- as frequently happens for indigenous and marginalized people--the Lenape characters invest in relationship, and what they offer in friendship and good faith is used as leverage for their removal. Moving between the stories in this way captures a sense, common to indigenous cultures, that ancestors move among us and may help us to respond to suffering with hard-earned wisdom from the past.

The play offers an exceedingly rare opportunity to experience mainstream art that is driven by indigenous storytelling rhythms and that centralizes the perspective of its indigenous characters, rather than the more usual erasure of indigenous people or the tendency to crop their story into a narrative that belongs to the dominant culture. We get a sense of how the first peoples viewed their early trades with European settlers, and of how persistently the perspectives of the colonizers erase evidence of agency and omit signs that they are dealing with a worthy trading partner. When a Lenape character addresses a settler in his language, he remarks in surprise, "You speak," as though

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

PHOTO COURTESY OF TRIMET
A community member places a flower onto a mural adorned with messages of hope and inspiration at the Hollywood Transit Center during its dedication Saturday to the victims of a fatal MAX train stabbings that occurred at the location one year ago and sent shockwaves through the city. The two men killed and another man who was injured in the attack were defending two teenage girls subjected to a racist tirade.



Transit Memorial Dedication

Hope and remembrance one year after deaths

Hundreds of Portlanders gathered Saturday at a new mural adorning the Hollywood Transit Center with messages of hope and remembrance one year after a

double fatal stabbing on MAX light rail stunned the community.

When an anti-Muslim, racial tirade against two young women was challenged by other passengers, the perpetrator then turned on Taliesin Myrddin Namkai-Meche

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

The Week in Review

Shelter Shooting Video

On Friday, Portland Police released video from surveillance cameras inside a south-east Portland homeless shelter which recorded the police shooting death of John Elifritz, 48, last April when he entered the shelter while experiencing a mental health crisis and wielding a knife. Elifritz' wife, Barbara Elifritz, has filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the city and eight law enforcement officers in federal court.

Rosanne Racism Dooms Show

ABC Tuesday canceled its hit reboot of the show "Roseanne" following a racist Twitter rant by the show's star, Roseanne Barr. A few hours earlier, Barr apologized for a tweet she sent out Monday that said "muslim brotherhood & planet of the apes had a baby=vj," which falsely tried to denigrate a former aide to President Obama, Valerie Jarrett.

Historical Boxer Pardoned

A pardon was issued by President Trump Thursday for the late boxer Jack Johnson, an African American convicted a century ago for the crime of taking a woman

across state lines, saying it righted a wrong in American history. In 1912, the heavy-weight boxer was arrested with Lucille Cameron, a white woman he would later marry.

NFL Bans Anthem Protests

Some athletes in the NFL are discussing alternative ways of protesting after NFL owners voted on a new policy last week that fines teams for any personnel that "do not show proper respect for the flag and Anthem." Kneeling during the national anthem rose to prominence when former 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick did so to protest racial inequality and police brutality in 2016.

Dolezal Charged With Fraud

The former NAACP leader in Washington State whose life was turned upside down when she was exposed as a white woman pretending to be black is now facing welfare fraud charges. Rachel Dolezal, who legally changed her name to Nkechi Diallo, has been charged with theft by welfare fraud, perjury, and false verification for public assistance.

Starbucks Anti Bias Training

Turning away customers looking for an afternoon jolt of caffeine, Starbucks shops across the U.S. began closing up early on Tuesday to hold training for employees on recognizing hidden prejudices. It was part of the coffee chain's effort to deal with the outcry over the arrest of two black men last month for sitting in a Philadelphia Starbucks without buying anything.

Harvey Weinstein Arraigned

Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein was brought to court Friday on charges of first- and third-degree rape and committing a criminal sexual act in the first degree, which stemmed from incidents from two different women in 2013 and 2004. The arraignment follows claims of multiple decades of abuse by many women first reported in the New York Times in October.

The Portland Observer Established 1970

USPS 959 680

4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Portland, OR 97211

CALL 503-288-0033 • FAX 503-288-0015



PO QR code

PUBLISHER: Mark Washington, Sr.

EDITOR: Michael Leighton

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Rakeem Washington

ADVERTISING MANAGER: Leonard Latin

Office Manager/Classifieds: Lucinda Baldwin

CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Paul Neufeldt

PUBLIC RELATIONS: Mark Washington Jr.

The Portland Observer welcomes freelance submissions. Manuscripts and photographs should be clearly labeled and will be returned if accompanied by a self addressed envelope. All created design display ads become the sole property of the newspaper and cannot be used in other publications or personal usage without the written consent of the general manager, unless the client has purchased the composition of such ad. © 2008 THE PORTLAND OBSERVER. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED, REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IS PROHIBITED. The Portland Observer--Oregon's Oldest Multicultural Publication--is a member of the National Newspaper Association--Founded in 1885, and The National Advertising Representative Amalgamated Publishers, Inc, New York, NY, and The West Coast Black Publishers Association.



news@portlandobserver.com • ads@portlandobserver.com

• subscription@portlandobserver.com

Postmaster: Send address changes to Portland Observer, PO Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208