

# PIONEER SONG' TELLS STORY OF THE OREGON TRAIL

By Lisa Britton  
Go! Magazine

BAKER CITY — Great Bear Folk Theatre is returning to Baker City for the third year in a row — one of the few performing acts that had a stage in 2020.

“Last year we were able to get it in before everybody shut down,” said Lori Hansen.

Lori and her husband, Omar, along with their daughter, Isabel, will be performing “Pioneer Song” July 3 and 4 in Baker City.

During those two days, their show can be seen at the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center at 10:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m.

On the evening of July 3, they will move to Geiser-Pollman Park in Baker City. That performance starts at 5 p.m.

All shows are free and open to the community.

“Pioneer Song” is a shorter version of a full-length musical Omar wrote in 1998 when he was a professor at Ricks College in Eastern Idaho.

“They said, ‘We need a play,’” he said.

The story he told, in musical form, was about one woman’s experience on the Oregon Trail.

“All the characters are based on



Great Bear Folk Theatre/Contributed Photo

Lori, Isabel, and Omar Hansen perform “Pioneer Song” July 3 and 4 at several locations in Baker City.

diaries of women who crossed the Oregon Trail,” Omar said.

The play is set in the mid-1800s and follows Ruth Maramin who joins a wagon company along with her three daughters.

The Oregon Trail experience, Lori said, was different for men and

women.

“The men counted and tracked the miles. The women counted the graves,” she said.

Omar researched his play by traveling the Oregon Trail himself.

“It was an amazing chance to see the different geography they went

through,” he said. “We marked the trail and studied the diaries. I wanted to write the reality of what happened.”

The diaries, he said, give modern readers a glimpse at the trials and triumphs the pioneers faced on the journey of more than 2,000 miles.

## ‘Pioneer Song’

- July 3 and 4 at the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, 10:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m., 2:30 p.m.
- July 3 at Geiser-Pollman Park, 5 p.m.

“You get this amazing sense of what happened on the trail,” he said. “Women really did depend on each other for keeping their life somewhat normal. The joy of researching and writing gave me so many insights to the culture of women in the 19th century.”

The premise of the play is how, over the course of the trail, the main character Ruth loses all three of her daughters in different ways.

He shortened the full-length version, which the trio will perform this weekend in Baker City,

“We condensed it to a three-person, 55-minute version,” he said.

Their daughter, Isabel, is the main singer of the production.

They’ve mostly performed “Pioneer Song” in locations close to the Oregon Trail route.

Great Bear Folk Theatre has other plays in its collection. To learn more, visit [www.greatbearfolktheatre.com](http://www.greatbearfolktheatre.com).



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