

Statesman Journal

Estimated printed pages: 3

May 6, 2002

Section: Life

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Chemeketa to open 'Fiddler'

Staff

Director Ted Desel brings the tale of faith and order to the stage.

'Fiddler on the Roof'

When: 7:30 p.m. Thursday through Saturday and May 16-18, with a 2 p.m. May 18 matinee. The May 17 performance will be signed for the hearing impaired.

Where: Chemeketa Auditorium, Building 6, Chemeketa Community College, 4000 Lancaster Drive NE, Salem

Cost: \$12 general admission, \$9 students and seniors. Festival seating

Call: (503) 399-2540 d

BY RON COWAN

Statesman Journal

The popular musical "Fiddler on the Roof," which opens at Chemeketa Community College on Thursday, may seem to be a long ago and far away tale.

Set in 1905 Russia, a part of the world that takes in Poland and the Baltics, this is the story of the Jewish milkman, Tevye, and the small village of Anatevka, a bastion of tradition in a changing world.

It's those changes, a Czarist government out to eliminate the Jewish community, that connects with director Ted Desel, a Chemeketa speech instructor.

As the title song, "Tradition," suggests, Tevye is trying to hold the line against change, both in his family with three marriageable daughters and in the greater, more threatening world.

"How to maintain a semblance of order and faith when the outside world is constantly tearing at us," is how Desel terms the theme.

"In some ways, 'Fiddler on the Roof' is another way to look at hate crime."

Post-Sept. 11, that issue resonates in a world that once again seems less safe.

There are two major dramatic conflicts in the story.

"The key one is how tradition, faith, holds us together and how that changes as we're assaulted by the world," Desel said.

The second is the romantic element, the fact that Tevye's three oldest daughters, Tzeitel, Hodel and Chava, all defy his directions on marriage.

One avoids using the traditional matchmaker in finding love, another finds a Jewish mate but also a man who is outside the community and has radical ideas.

The third falls for a non-Jewish man, a Russian, who is part of the culture oppressing the Jews.

"So how is that tradition now going to hold up?" Desel asks.

"All of that underlies some wonderful music but also some very truthful and honest things about who we are."

The show was adapted by playwright Joseph Stein from the stories of Sholem Aleichem.

Desel also see the musical as a memory piece, with Tevye looking back at what happened to his family and his village.

"Fiddler on the Roof," both a Broadway hit and a major movie, comes with certain expectations from the audience.

Most people know the songs, which include "Sunrise, Sunset," "Matchmaker, Matchmaker," "Anatevka," and "Do You Love Me?" The score is by Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick.

Desel, who directed "The Music Man" at Chemeketa last year, is expanding the effort this year to include an 15-person orchestra, conducted by John Radosta, and a 38-person cast.

"It's another step up from where we were last year with 'The Music Man,'" he said.

The cast includes students, staff and faculty, as well as community members from as far away as McMinnville. The ages range from 9 to the 60s.

"I know there are different fine interpretations, different qualities, each of the characters are bringing to this show that are different from the movie or the CD," he said.

Ray Phipps, a veteran of several shows at Albany Civic Theatre, plays Tevye.

His wife, Golde, is played by Sheila Sund, with Karissa Schrock as Tzeitel, Brianne Emry as Hodel, Brooke Munoz as Chava, Hannah Lembcke as Shprintze, Kelsey Popovich as Bielka, Jacob Mainord as Motel and Jeff Watson as Perchik.

Ruby Sue Whittley plays the matchmaker Yente, and Marty Emry is Lazar Wolf.

Terry Rohse, the technical director, plays the Rabbi.

Choreography is by Dee Montgomery, with costumes are by Zoe Daicou.

Ron Cowan can be reached at (503) 399-6728 or rcowan@StatesmanJournal.com