2012 Summer Events Guide: Theater and dance top picks

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Marty Hughley, The Oregonian

"Penelope" In Homer's epic poem "The Odyssey," the hero's decades-long absence draws a group of suitors to his home, men who hope to woo his wife, the beautiful Penelope. In Irish playwright Enda Walsh's wildly imaginative, word-drunk take on this sliver of a classic, the suitors become squabbling, Speedo-clad middle-aged men stuck in an abandoned swimming pool. Terrific Third Rail Rep regulars Bruce Burkhartsmeier, Chris Murray, Michael O'Connell and Tim True are joined by Britt Harris as their object of desire. June 1-17, Winningstad Theatre, thirdrailrep.org

"Dance United" What started as a lifeline has turned into a streamer. The first "Dance United" gala in 2009 was part of a desperate effort to save Oregon Ballet Theatre from a budgetary crisis. But the program that blended OBT's own with guest dancers from other top companies was a hit, and continues as an annual season-ending celebration. This time, guests will come from New York City Ballet, the Joffrey Ballet, the Dutch National Ballet and others. June 9, Keller Auditorium, obt.org

"Hamlet" Since 1970, the play has been the thing for the Portland Actors Ensemble with its free outdoor productions of Shakespeare's comedies and tragedies. The can't-miss show this year is "Hamlet" performed in Southeast Portland's Lone Fir Cemetery. That's right: Shakespeare's great play about murder, ghosts and gravediggers will be performed in a cemetery. How cool is that? June 14-July 14,
Oregon Shakespeare Festival  The jewel of summer arts offerings in the Northwest, OSF's venerable Elizabethan Stage opens with productions of Shakespeare's "Henry V" and "As You Like It," plus Alison Carey's playful American update "The Very Merry Wives of Windsor, Iowa" (Senator Falstaff, anyone?). 

June 15-Oct. 14, in rotating repertory, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Ashland, osfashland.org

"Just 17!" A benefit and birthday party for Conduit, the scrappy survivor at the heart of Portland's contemporary dance scene, this event will feature a variety of performances -- but surely none more poignant than choreographer Josie Moseley's tribute to Conduit co-founder Mary Oslund. June 16, Conduit Dance, conduit-pdx.org

"The Odd Couple" Clackamas Repertory Theatre's production of this comic touchstone stars Michael O'Connell as the fastidious Felix Ungar and Tim True as the messy Oscar Madison, top-notch comic actors who should have the chemistry to make the most of Neil Simon's indelible characters and sharply drawn dialogue. June 29-July 22

"Lear's Follies"/"King Lear" In only its second summer season, Portland Shakespeare Project scales tragedy's peak, not only with a "King Lear" directed by Jon Kretzu, but with Portland playwright C.S. Whitcomb's taut, smart American adaptation, in which the kingdom is a family tobacco empire in 1920s Virginia. July 13, Artists Repertory Theatre, portlandshakes.org

"Jersey Boys" The story of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons was a 2006 Tony Award and Grammy Award winner, capturing the nostalgic glow of 1960s pop glory, from street-crooner origins to the Top 40 spotlight. July 18-Aug. 12, Keller Auditorium, portlandopera.org/broadway/2011-2012#JERSEY BOYS

BodyVox Portland's internationally popular dance troupe was formed to fulfill a commission from Portland Opera, so it's fitting that the company's 15th anniversary season opens with a classical-music collaboration. "In Motion With Chamber Music Northwest" will include a new dance set to Stravinsky's "The Soldier's Tale." July 20-22, Lincoln Performance Hall, bodyvox.com/bodyvox/in-motion-with-cmnw

JAW: A Playwrights Festival Portland Center Stage's free public peek into the hard work of new-play development features fresh work from six top writers -- including previous PCS contributors Adam Bock ("The Thugs," "The Receptionist"), Lauren Weedman ("Bust") and Fin Kennedy ("How to Disappear Completely and Never Be Found") -- plus a night of short plays by Oregon playwrights. July 26-29, Gerding Theater, pcs.org/jaw

Anonymous Theatre The director holds auditions, casts the play and rehearses the actors -- but only one at a time. The cast learns who's in the play only in the course of the public performance. This annual event, presented by Theatre Vertigo, is a seat-of-the-pants stage adventure and a night of great fun. This year, the play is Neil Simon's Anton Chekhov-inspired comedy "The Good Doctor." Aug. 12, Gerding Theater, theatrevertigo.org/fundraisers/anonymous2012.html

-- Marty Hughley
More theater and dance

Classical Music

ASTORIA MUSIC FESTIVAL
Astoria
The festival celebrates its 10th anniversary with 17 days of opera, award-winning classical musicians, young artists and chamber players. The program is extensive, and performances take place almost daily June 15-July 1; see website for schedule and prices. Astoria; prices vary; astoriamusicfestival.org

"SUMMER OF LOVE"
Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall
The Portland Gay Men's Chorus offers music of the '60s with a trip through pop music's early festivals of peace and love. 7:30 p.m. Sat, June 16. 1037 S.W. Broadway; tickets start at $16; pdxgmc.org

CHAMBER MUSIC NORTHWEST SUMMER FESTIVAL 2012
Portland
Highlights of the annual festival June 25-July 29 include performances by the Tokyo String Quartet, Time for Three, BodyVox Dance and several operatic performers. Venues are Reed College's Kaul Auditorium, PSU's Lincoln Hall and Catlin Gabel School. See website for complete schedule and ticket information. Daily June 25-July 29. Single tickets $25-$50; cmnw.org

2012 BARBERSHOP HARMONY SOCIETY CONVENTION
Rose Garden arena
The best 64 harmony quartets and 30 choruses from around the world gather in Portland for the annual convention and contest. Some of the events are open to the public, and the grand event, "Champs Night Out," features top groups in a concert of barbershop. See website events scheduled July 1-8. Champs Night 7:30 p.m. Thu, July 5. One Center Court; ticket start at $20; barbershop.org/portland-international-main.html or 503-235-8771

WILLIAM BYRD FESTIVAL
Portland
The annual festival sponsored by Cantores in Ecclesia features concerts, lectures, Masses, recitals and choral performances at various locations in Portland. See website for schedule. Aug. 10-26. Ticket prices to be announced; BrownPaperTickets, 800-838-3006; byrdfestival.org

Comedy

JANE LYNCH
Portland Center for the Performing Arts
Lynch -- an Emmy-winning actress, comedian and hot commodity -- comes to Portland as a guest of Third Rail Repertory Theatre for an evening of questions and answers with OPB's Dave Miller. 7:30 p.m. Sat, June 16. Newmark Theatre, 1111 S.W. Broadway; $45-$75; Ticketmaster, 800-745-3000; thirdrailrep.org or 503-248-4335
RED GREEN'S "WIT & WISDOM" TOUR Portland Center for the Performing Arts
The Canadian television hit comedy "The Red Green Show" comes to Portland for a night of handyman humor. 7 p.m. Tue, July 17. Newmark Theatre, 1111 S.W. Broadway; $45; Ticketmaster, 800-745-3000; www.pcpa.com or 503-248-4335

Dance

"SUMMER SPLENDORS"
Northwest Dance Project Studio
The international award-winning company performs in Portland prior to a trip to London for the 2012 Cultural Olympiad performances. The intimate show features four world premieres from acclaimed choreographers Sarah Slipper, Tracey Durbin, Gregory Dolbashian and Kate Wallich. Various times June 8-10 and 14-16. 833 N. Shaver St.; $30 advance; http://nwdanceproject.org/shows.html or 503-828-8285

"IN MOTION"
Lincoln Performance Hall
BodyVox opens its 15th anniversary season with the world premiere of a new work by Jamey Hampton and Ashley Roland. The work was created in collaboration with Chamber Music Northwest and will be preformed live with CMNW festival and Protege Project artists. Fri-Sun, July 20-22. Portland State University, 1620 S.W. Park Ave.; single ticket pricing will be announced June 1; www.bodyvox.com

Theater

"LEAR'S FOLLIES" BY C. S. WHITCOMB
Artists Repertory Theatre
Portland Shakespeare Project presents a play about a Virginia family's tobacco empire in 1929 that explores issues of pride, greed, friendship, devotion and the choices people make that keep them shackled emotionally to their past. Performed in repertory with "King Lear." See website to confirm specific dates for each play. July 11-Aug. 5. 1515 S.W. Morrison St.; $18 general; http://portlandshakes.org or 503-241-1278

"KING LEAR"
Artists Repertory Theatre
The Portland Shakespeare Project presents the work that has inspired scholars, poets and even plumbers for hundreds of years. Various times and dates July 18-Aug. 4. 1515 S.W. Morrison St.; $18-$30; http://portlandshakes.org or 503-241-1278

"MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING"
Milepost 5
The Willamette Shakespeare Theatre Company offers 11 free performances throughout the summer. Start with this one, then make your way through venues around the state; see website for times and locations. 7 p.m. Sat, July 28. 900 N.E. 81st. Ave.; free; willametteshakespeare.org or 503-729-3223

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