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***THE FANTASTICKS* EVOKES MEMORIES IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE**

Longest-running Musical Finds New Life in Chris Coleman's Production

PCS Production Opens on Same Date – January 13 – That *The Fantasticks* Closed in New York, after Nearly 42 Years in the Same Theater

*Try to remember when life was so tender
That love was an ember about to billow.*

-- From "Try to Remember," the signature song of
The Fantasticks

Tom Jones and **Harvey Schmidt's *The Fantasticks*** has a tender innocence that's been irresistible to theater-lovers for 45 years. And in **Chris Coleman's** production, January 10 – February 5, 2006, the play will have a specific poignancy for **PORTLAND CENTER STAGE** audiences. Set at the strike for *This Wonderful Life*, *The Fantasticks'* characters are stagehands who draw on stored scenery, props and costumes to create the musical. Keen-eyed PCS fans will recognize bits from many productions over the theater's 18-year history in the Newmark Theatre. So, *The Fantasticks*, a love story with magic realism, is also a valentine to that history and that theater as PCS prepares to open its new home, the Bob and Diana Gerding Theater (formerly The Armory) on September 30, 2006.

The Fantasticks previews at the Newmark Theatre, 1111 SW Broadway at Main, Tuesday, January 10 - Thursday, January 12; opens Friday, January 13 and closes with the 2 PM matinée on Sunday, February 5. Evening performances take place at 7 PM Tuesday, Wednesday, Sunday and 8 PM Thursday, Friday, Saturday while Noon Thursday and 2 PM Saturday and Sunday matinée dates are also available. Tickets: \$15, 30+under, \$20 - \$56, others; box office: 503-274-6588; information: www.pcs.org. This year, second balcony seats for every PCS production are only \$20. The third production in PCS' 05-06 **McDonald Financial Group** Mainstage series, *The Fantasticks* is sponsored by **Gerding/Edlen Development, GBD Architects, Hoffman Construction Ticor Title Insurance** and **Judy and Martin Kelley**, with additional support from the **Regional Arts and Culture Council**.

The Fantasticks is the longest continuous running musical in American theater history. The plot is a twist on *Romeo and Juliet*, in which Hucklebee (**Ron Daum**) and Bellomy (**Michael Mandell**), the respective fathers of Matt (**Raymond Lee**) and Luisa (**Rebecca Stanley**), invent a feud in order to drive the two young people together. The play opened on May 3, 1960 at the tiny Sullivan Street Playhouse in Greenwich Village (with Jerry Ohrbach as El Gallo, here played by Broadway veteran **Adrian Bailey**) and didn't stop until January 13, 2002, after 17,162 performances. As Tom Jones explains, "We wanted to celebrate romanticism and mock it at the

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same time. To touch people, and then to make them laugh, and then to turn the laugh around, find the other side of it. To put two emotions side by side, as close together as possible, like a chord of music.” A visit to ***The Fantasticks*** became a beloved ritual for any theater-lover and the success of the off-off-Broadway production had a great deal to do with igniting the off-Broadway movement.

In the face of mega-musicals in the Rogers and Hammerstein and Lerner and Lowe traditions, ***The Fantasticks*** dared to tell a simple story – of young love – in a simple way with minimal props and sets that only suggested reality, much like the playlet of Pyramus and Thisbe in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Its simplicity is inherently theatrical. Originally conceived as a Broadway extravaganza, ***The Fantasticks*** kept getting smaller and smaller. Harvey Schmidt explains, “I realized that if you just gave me the characters and the story, I could believe anything. If you didn’t ask me to believe anything, I could believe everything.”

Director **Chris Coleman** was inspired to advance that quality of the musical with this production. Working with **Dex Edwards**, the set designer who created *This Wonderful Life*, they decided to set ***The Fantasticks*** at the strike for TWL. Edwards observed that stage hands often sing while dismantling a set and that they usually have excellent voices. Under Coleman’s guidance, Matt, Luisa and all the rest begin as stagehands who pick out a tune on a piano that then becomes a fully-developed song. As stagehands, they tentatively don a stored costume or pick up a stray prop in order to become a character. The action becomes more intentional as set pieces, rummaged from back stage, begin to fly in and out. The theatrical and emotional effect is, indeed, *Fantastick*.

TOM JONES (book and lyrics) and **HARVEY SCHMIDT** (music) began writing together in 1950 while students at the University of Texas. *The Fantasticks* did not have an auspicious beginning. Critics were far from universally kind and houses, at first, were small. But key influencers – like Vivien Leigh, Tallulah Bankhead, Richard Rogers, David O. Selznick and Jennifer Rodgers – attended those early performances and word of mouth began to grow. Jones and Schmidt have continued to collaborate for more than 50 years. Their others shows include *I Do! I Do!*, *Celebration*, *Philemon* and *110 Degrees in the Shade*.

Director **CHRIS COLEMAN** is the artistic director of PORTLAND CENTER STAGE. Among the many firsts he’s introduced to the theater since his appointment in May 2001 is PCS’ first musical, William Finn’s *A New Brain*, produced in his first season. PCS has included a musical in nearly every season since, including *Gypsy*, *Bat Boy*, and *My Fair Lady*. Chris loves musicals of all kinds and has a fair singing voice himself. He often sings bits from his favorites while navigating the halls of PCS.

Adrian Bailey*	El Gallo	Chris Coleman	Director
Ron Daum*	Hucklebee	Rick Lewis	Music Director
Raymond Lee*	Matt	Eric Skinner	Assistant Director
Michael Mandell*	Bellomy	Dex Edwards	Set Designer
Rebecca Stanley*	Luisa	Jeff Cone	Costume Designer
Brian Thompson*	Henry	Peter Maradudin	Lighting Designer
Tim True*	Mortimer/Mute	Jen Raynak	Sound Designer
		Mark Tynan*	Stage Manager

* The actors and stage manager are Equity.

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***The Fantasticks* by Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt**
Portland Center Stage • Newmark Theatre • 1111 SW Broadway • Tickets: \$15 – \$56
Box Office: 503-274-6588 • www.pcs.org

Performance Schedule and Special Events

<u>Evenings</u>	7 PM		8 PM
Tuesdays	Jan 10 (P), Jan 17, 24, 31	Thursdays	Jan 12 (P), Jan 19, 26, Feb 2
Wednesdays	Jan 11 (P), Jan 18, 25, Feb 1	Fridays	Jan 13 (O), Jan 20, 27, Feb 3
Sundays	Jan 15, 22, 29	Saturdays	Jan 14, 21, 28, Feb 4
<u>Matinées</u>	2 PM		Noon
Sundays	Jan 15, 22, 29, Feb 5 (C)	Thursdays	Jan 19, 26, Feb 2
Saturday	Feb 4		

(P) = Preview • (O) = Opens • (C) = Closes Run time: 2 hours

Q&A

Thursdays, January 19, 26 Noon Third floor Gallery
 Saturday, February 4 2 PM

Discuss the play in an open dialogue with members of the company, immediately following the performance.

Access Performances

<u>Audio Described</u>		<u>Sign Interpreted</u>	
Friday, January 20	8 PM	Thursday, January 26	8 PM

The Newmark is fully accessible for all people with disabilities. Large print programs and assistive listening devices are available from the coatroom, **free** of charge.

Forum

Sunday, January 22 2 PM Third floor Gallery
 Join special music director Alan Lytle and composer Mark La Pierre in a discussion of “The Dark Side of Musical Theater.” Immediately following the matinée.

PORTLAND CENTER STAGE, founded in 1988 and a resident company of the Portland Center for the Performing Arts, attracts more than 90,000 theatergoers annually. With five mainstage and two second stage productions each season, PCS produces a blend of classical, contemporary and world premiere works in addition to its annual summer playwrights’ festival, Just Add Water/West. PCS has embarked upon a \$32.9 million capital campaign to renovate the historic Portland Armory and create a permanent home for the company. The new facility, recently named the Bob and Diana Gerding Theater, will house a 600-seat mainstage and a 200-seat black box theater and is being designed to be the first historic rehabilitation, and hopes to be the first performing arts venue, to achieve a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum rating. To date, more than \$16.6 million has been secured for the project. The Gerding Theater will open on September 30, 2006. PCS’s remaining 2005 - 2006 season comprises:

- Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt, *The Fantasticks*, January 10 – February 5, 2006
- Rolin Jones, *The Intelligent Design of Jenny Chow*, February 14 – March 5, 2006
- Regina Taylor, *Crowns*, March 14 – April 9, 2006
- Itamar Moses, *Celebrity Row*, March 21 – April 16, 2006 -- **World Premiere**