

M E D I A R E L E A S E

KEN KESEY'S ESSENTIAL OREGON NOVEL DEBUTS ONSTAGE

*Portland Center Stage presents the World Premiere of **Sometimes a Great Notion**, the Oregon novel named #1 in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer's 'Essential NW Books.'*

March 11, 2008 - PORTLAND The novel that Ken Kesey described as the "best thing I'll ever write" gets a World Premiere staging at Portland Center Stage this April, introducing Kesey's wild and wooly portrait of an Oregon coastal logging community to a new generation of Oregonians. *Sometimes a Great Notion* will preview April 1 through April 3, with the **Opening Night on Friday April 4, 2008**. The production will run **Tuesday through Sunday through April 27th**, with 7:30 pm evening performances and matinee performances at 2 pm on Sundays and noon on Thursday April 10, 17 and 24. Tickets range from \$26.50 to \$43.50, with Student and Rush tickets available. Tickets can be purchased through the box office by calling 503.445.3700 or online at www.pcs.org.

Set in the small coastal town of Wakonda Oregon in 1961, *Sometimes a Great Notion* follows the loves, deaths and rivalries of the Stammers, an Oregon logging family attempting to carve a foothold in Oregon's fertile but flooded native soil. Brawling, boozing, cussed and cussing, the Stammers have survived and thrived for three generations under the unforgiving motto "Never. Give. An. Inch." When a union strike threatens to shut down production, they cut their own deal with the lumber company, sending the town of striking loggers howling into an uproar. Against this backdrop, Kesey weaves the story of two brothers: Hank, the brawny and fearless heir to the Stamper throne; and his younger brother Leland, the clan's only intellectual, sent east for schooling and called back to help the Stammers make their delivery deadline. Emotionally stunted from too much time spent in his brother's long shadow, Leland hatches a complicated plot to cut through his brother's armor, hoping that by toppling the big man he can carve out some room to grow himself. The resulting power plays set in motion a chain of events that will leave the town and the Stammers changed forever.

Ken Kesey wrote *Sometimes a Great Notion* in the aftermath of his success with *One Flew the Cuckoo's Nest*, moving to the quiet California logging town of La Jonda, California to get inspired and often banging away at his draft 20 to 30 hours at a stretch. He describes that time as some of the best years of his life, where he was "creating something that had never been done before." The resultant novel broke new ground for narrative style, shifting fluidly between one narrator and the next from page to page (and sometimes in mid-sentence). Lauded by critics, *Notion* never achieved the popular success of *Cuckoo's Nest*, and is often called the greatest NW novel you never read. It was chosen as one of the Oregon Cultural Heritage Commission's 100 Oregon Books, and was named first in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer's list of Essential NW Books. Bruce Barcott, editor of the literature anthology *NW Passages* and one of the writers asked to nominate books for the Essential NW list gushed that *Sometimes a Great Notion* has

"Shakespearean themes played out against a raw, burly Oregon backdrop.

*Still the heavyweight champion of Pacific Northwest novels.
Huge, bold, sprawling, brilliant. Unrivaled, unchallenged, unsurpassed.
(I'll stop before I make a fool of myself)."*

Adaptor/director **Aaron Posner** first encountered the book while growing up in Eugene, Oregon – also Ken Kesey's home town for much of his adult life. He met with Kesey years later to request permission to adapt the novel, and secured a commission from Seattle Rep to produce it. A change in leadership put the project on hold until Portland Center Stage Artistic Director Chris Coleman invited Aaron to develop and ultimately premiere the piece in Portland. Aaron describes the Gerding Theater in the 116 year old, newly renovated Armory as "*the perfect place to premiere this play.*" The Armory's history, combined with Kesey's deep roots in Oregon literary and theatrical circles and Portland Center Stage's commitment to developing and launching new work makes for a perfect mix of elements in which to nurture this truly historic World Premiere event.

The cast of *Sometimes a Great Notion* is also a mixture of celebrated Oregon actors and well respected regional talent. **Tobias Andersen**, artistic director of Mt. Hood Repertory Theatre, will play the family patriarch, Henry Stamper. Other roles include Joe Ben (**Andy Paterson**), Vivian (**Sarah Wilson**), Leland (**Karl Miller**), and Hank (**P.J. Sosko**). Kesey's shifting narrative voices and the faces of the townsfolk will be embodied by a six man chorus, including some of Oregon's finest character actors. The chorus includes **Kevin-Michael Moore**, **Chris Murray**, **Scott Coopwood**, **Tim True**, **Todd Van Voris**, and **Jim Wisniewski**.

Scenic Design is by **Tony Cisek**, Costume Design will be by **Jeff Cone** and lighting will be designed by **Dan Covey**. Creating the unique sounds of this Oregon story will be Sound Designer **Casi Pacillo** and Composer **Jim Ragland**.

Adaptor/Director **Aaron Posner** is the founding Artistic Director of Philadelphia's Arden Theatre Company, and the current Artistic Director of Two River Theater in Red Bank, New Jersey. He has directed at Seattle Rep, Arizona Theatre Company, the Alliance Theatre, Actor's Theatre of Louisville, and the Folger Shakespeare Theatre, among others. His literary adaptations include *Who am I This Time?* by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., "*What Ho Jeeves*" by P.G. Wodehouse, *The Brothers K.* by Fyodor Dostoevsky, and *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* by David Foster Wallace (with Scott Greer, Tony Lawton and Michael Hollinger). His adaptation, with Chaim Potok, of *The Chosen* won the 1999 Barrymore Award for Best New Play. His upcoming adaptations include Chaim Potok's, *My Name is Asher Lev* (Arden Theatre, winter 2009), and *So it Goes*, from short stories by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. (Two River Theater, winter 2009). Aaron is an Eisenhower Fellow, holds a B.S. in Performance Studies from Northwestern University, and is originally from Eugene, Oregon.

PORTLAND CENTER STAGE inspires our community by bringing stories to life in unexpected ways. Established in 1988 as an off shoot of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, PCS became an independent theater in 1994 and has been under the leadership of Artistic Director Chris Coleman since May 2000. The company presents a blend of classic, contemporary and original productions in a conscious effort to appeal to the eclectic palate of theatergoers in Portland. PCS also offers a variety of education and outreach programs for curious minds from six to 106, including the PCS GreenHouse, a school of theater.

THE GERDING THEATER AT THE ARMORY houses a 599-seat Main Stage and a 200-seat black box Studio. It was the first building on the National Register of Historic Places, and the first performing arts venue, to achieve a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum certification. The Gerding Theater at the Armory opened to the public on Oct. 1, 2006. The capital campaign to fund the renovation of this hub for community artistic activity continues.

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Ken Kesey's
Sometimes a Great Notion
adapted and directed by Aaron Posner

Fact Sheet

Portland Center Stage * Main Stage * Gerding Theater at the Armory * 128 NW Eleventh Ave.
Box Office: 503.445.3700 Info, Blogs and Tix by Web: www.pcs.org

The Cast

Joe Ben.....Andy Paterson*
Vivian.....Sarah Wilson*
Leland.....Karl Miller*
Henry.....Tobias Anderson*
Hank.....P.J. Sosko*
Gibbons.....Kevin-Michael Moore*
Henderson.....Chris Murray*
Newton.....Scott Coopwood*
Sorenson.....Tim True*
Brother Walker.....Todd Van Voris*
Floyd Evenwrite.....Jim Wisniewski*

*the actors and stage managers in this production are members of Actors Equity, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.

Performance Dates

Previews: T – Th, April 1-3 7:30pm
Opening: Friday, April 4 7:30pm
Closing: Saturday, April 27, 7:30pm
Fade to Black: April 8th, 7:30 pm

Please consult www.pcs.org for a complete list of performance dates/times.

Student/Senior Matinees

Every Thursday Matinee at Noon is programmed especially for our student and senior audiences. Patrons enjoy discounted ticket prices and post-show Q&A sessions with the cast and crew of Sometimes A Great Notion.

Audio Described Performance

Friday, April 11 7:30 PM

The Gerding Theater Studio is fully accessible for patrons with disabilities. Assistive listening devices are available from the coatroom.

Sign Interpreted Performance

Thursday, April 17 7:30 PM

Ticket Prices

Table with 3 columns: Ticket Category, Area 1, Area 2. Rows include Preview Evenings, Sunday-Thursdays, Friday & Saturday, Sunday Matinees, Thursday & Saturday Matinees, Students, 18 & under, and Rush.

Preferred price range listing: \$28.00 - \$61.50 adults, with student and group rates available