



Thursday, May 17, 2001

'Just So Stories' presented at Varner Studio Theatre

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

Oakland University's **Department of Music, Theatre and Dance** will present a theatrical adaptation of Rudyard Kipling's "Just So Stories" at Varner Studio Theatre beginning Tuesday, May 22.

Kipling, who wrote "The Jungle Book," originally authored the "Just So Stories" as bedtime tales for his own children. Among the tales of how things came to be "just so" are "How the Leopard Got His Spots," "The Elephant's Child" and "How the Camel Got His Hump."

Assistant theatre professor Kerro Knox 3 and associate theatre professor Karen Sheridan adapted Kipling's work for the stage and are co-directors. The set and lighting design is by Eric Maher and the costumes are by Donna Buckley.

"We tried to take something on a page and make it visual," Sheridan said. "We took what we felt were the most interesting and famous stories and visualized them onstage. All the narration and dialogue the audience will hear is from Kipling. We tried to keep it intact as much as we could, but at the same time, we had to translate the words into action, otherwise you would have a choral piece."

Sheridan described the adaptation as a "family/children's theatre piece" and said the stories are for adults just as much as for children.

"We wanted mainly to focus on the animal stories, and in many of those tales, the animals learn a lesson somehow. It's a little bit like Aesop's Fables," Sheridan said. "We also tried to put in as much humor as we could."

"It's a very physical show and a family show. It's a nice way for children to greet Kipling's stories."

Since nearly all the characters in the adaptation are animals, the students in "Just So Stories" made a trip to the Detroit Zoo for one rehearsal to observe the animals and their behavior. Sheridan said a performance at the Detroit Zoo also is being considered.

Morning matinee performances will be held at 10 a.m. May 22-25, May 29-31, June 1 and June 4-8. Evening performances are at 7 p.m. June 1, 2, 8 and 9. Tickets are \$5 for all matinee performances. Evening performances are \$10 for the general public, \$8 for seniors and OU employees, and \$5 for students and children. Tickets only are sold at the door one hour before each performance starts.

SUMMARY

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