



Thursday, October 9, 2003

## MBT opens season, launches new Web site

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

**Meadow Brook Theatre** (MBT), now under the leadership of the Meadow Brook Theatre Ensemble, opens its 2003-04 season next week with a set of seven performances, including a perennial holiday favorite, and a new Web site.

The nonprofit ensemble, which leases the theatre facilities from Oakland University, will open its first season Wednesday, Oct. 15, with a staging of "The Gravity of Honey." Other plays include an adaptation of the John Steinbeck classic "Of Mice and Men" and the holiday classic "A Christmas Carol."

Information on all MBT performances can be found on the **Meadow Brook Theatre** Web site, which was launched in September. The site contains performance dates, times, ticket information, press releases and other information. Site enhancements continue, and by the end of October, patrons will be able to purchase tickets online.

Though the relatively late start in organizing the season and uncertainty surrounding the theatre's future caused MBT to lose several sponsors and get a late start in its subscription drive, patrons can expect to find the same level of quality in its productions.

"The easiest thing (about the transition to the ensemble) is that we've been able to maintain our artistic integrity," said MBT Managing Director John Manfredi. "Though our staffers took a 20 percent pay cut, we have 90 percent of the same artistic staff working with us. The quality of what people see will remain the same or be improved."

The ensemble also has taken steps to further its relationship with Oakland's **Department of Music, Theatre and Dance** (MTD).

"We currently have five members of our permanent staff who teach for music, theatre and dance," Manfredi said. "We have great cooperation between us and the student production of 'Great Expectations,' including a lot of help from our sound engineer and his class. We also have three full-time interns who are OU grads."

The theatre also is adding an adjunct series called "Edge of Brook," which will feature bands and acts from other theatres as well as MTD performances.

"The Edge of Brook series will have a variety of programs and be scheduled on our off nights (Mondays and Tuesdays)," Manfredi said. "Hopefully down the road we'll also schedule some films for those nights."

To order tickets, contact the Meadow Brook Theatre box office at (248) 377-3300. Box office hours are Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

### 2003-2004 PERFORMANCES

#### "The Gravity of Honey" Oct. 15-Nov. 9

This two-character dramatic comedy concerns a priest in a dying New York parish and a third-rate nightclub singer named Honey whose sudden demonstrations of extraordinary genius may be divinely inspired. The play focuses on the effect the two have on each other's lives.

#### "A Christmas Carol" Nov. 28-Dec. 21

Audiences will experience the true meaning of Christmas in this adaptation of the classic Charles Dickens' story as Ebenezer Scrooge encounters the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future.

#### "Greater Tuna" Jan. 7-Feb. 1

In this comedy about Texas' third smallest town, the eclectic band of citizens are portrayed by only two performers,

making this satire on life in rural America even more delightful as they depict all of the inhabitants of Tuna – men, women, children and even animals.

**“Of Mice and Men” Feb. 11-March 7**

John Steinbeck’s classic novel depicts the struggle to exist in a jobless America. George and his sidekick Lenny find their friendship is tested to the limit. This touching story has made an indelible impression on all who have seen it.

**“Talking With” March 17-April 11**

This quirky and bizarre dramatic comedy offers five-minute vignettes of women whose eccentricities are exceeded only by their ability to cope. From actresses to rodeo riders, snake handlers to housewives, audiences will not soon forget these women.

**“The Fantasticks” April 21-May 16**

Audiences will experience the magic and heartache of young romance in this musical – the longest running show in the history of American theatre. The simple tale depicts a funny and touching story of innocence and knowledge. Its ingredients are simple: a boy, a girl, two fathers and a wall. Since its 1959 introduction, the musical has had more than 10,000 productions throughout the world.

**SUMMARY**

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