

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

The Pirates of Ashland

Chloe Veltman · Thursday, August 4th, 2011

I've been wanting to visit the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) ever since I first heard about the massive, southern Oregon-based company's fame upon arriving in the U.S. in 1998. I'm ashamed that it's taken me so long to actually make the seven-hour road-trip to Ashland, the small town where the 76-year-old festival takes place. Not only is the festival very old, but it's also very big: Each year OSF presents an eight-and-a-half-month season of eleven plays in three theatres — that's more than 780 performances annually with attendance of around 400,000 people.

In my defense, getting to visit and write about OSF has not been easy. I've tried on a number of occasions to persuade editors to send me to Ashland, but to no avail. Amidst shrinking budgets, the media is cutting back, and Ashland, it seems, is not considered news anymore by many media organizations that should know better. The San Francisco Chronicle used to send its theatre critic there every year. This hasn't happened for some time now. Covering OSF would be a sensible thing for The Chron to reinstate: Practically every person I spoke over the weekend hailed from the Bay Area and several lamented the lack of coverage. (I too found it hard to unearth reviews online of any of the shows.) The Chronicle should make an effort to put its critic, Robert Hurwitt, back on the OSF beat. Audiences are clearly craving decent coverage of the event.

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Photo by Charles Erickson, OSF's The Pirates of Penzance on opening night.

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