



News & Events

University News & Information

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, California

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Austrian Puppet Theatre Troupe Performs "A Midsummer Night's Dream" Feb. 19

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- The New York Times declared the Salzburg Marionette Theatre company to be "spellbinding artists." On Thursday, February 19, 2004 at 7 p.m. in the Christopher Cohan Center, the Salzburg Marionette Theatre performs Shakespeare's popular comedy, "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

Considered to be the best of its kind in the world, the string puppet theatre boasts intricately-crafted two-foot tall characters and veteran actors with the uncanny ability to bring wood to life.

Cal Poly Arts presents the full-length production, performed in English with incidental music by Felix Mendelssohn. The show is recommended for ages 8 years old and up. Seating will be in the orchestra section only.

The Salzburg Marionette Theater was founded by sculptor Anton Aicher in 1913 and became known for the fairy tales they staged for children.

In 1926, Aicher gave his son Hermann the marionette theater and Hermann used his technical expertise to turn the theater into a real miniature stage, which led to elaborate operas being staged. Soon, Mozart's "small" operas, including "Apollo and Hyacinth" and "The Impresario," were on the regular program.

From 1927 to 1934, the marionette theater went on tour to Hamburg, Vienna, and Holland, as well as on a major tour through the Balkans and to Istanbul, Sofia and Athens.

Between 1940 and 1944, performances were given at the front. In 1944, Hermann Aicher was called to the army and the theater was closed.

After the end of World War II, the Marionettes performed in Paris' renowned Théâtre des Champs Élysées and after that, an intensive period of tours and guest appearances followed and new productions were staged -- in particular, Mozart's five "great" operas.

The current theater was opened in 1971 with a performance of Rossini's "Il Barbiere di Siviglia." Tours commenced throughout Europe, America, and Asia. The Marionettes were seen and admired in New York, Paris, Italy, Switzerland, Hong Kong, and Japan.

In 1994 and 1995, five Mozart operas were recorded for television and video with Sir Peter Ustinov as the narrator. In 1996, the Salzburg Marionette Theater participated for the first time in the Salzburg Festival with a new production of Weber's "Oberon."

1998 saw the first co-production with the Salzburg Easter Festival of Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf." To commemorate the Salzburg Marionettes 85th birthday, a new museum, "The World of Marionettes," was opened in the Fortress Hohensalzburg in July, 1998.

In 2001, the Salzburg Marionette Theater expanded its repertoire with the addition of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream." "Hansel and Gretel" by E. Humperdinck was premiered in December of 2003.

Tickets for the performance are \$28 & \$34, with student discounts available, and may be purchased at the Performing Arts Ticket Office, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays. To order by phone, call 805/756-2787; to order by fax: 805/756-6088. Order on-line at www.pacslo.org.

This performance is sponsored by Xela and Kira Smith in memory of their father, Doug Smith and by KCBX 90.1 FM.

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