



A MUSICAL DRAMA • BY PAUL GREEN

PRODUCED BY THE NON-PROFIT TEXAS PANHANDLE HERITAGE FOUNDATION, INC.

BOX 268 • 2010 4TH AVE. CANYON, TEXAS 79015 • 806-655-2181

Patty Bryant, Publicist
Feature Story on "TEXAS"

25 YEARS OF "TEXAS"

Cowboys strap on their gun belts, climb on their horses and head for the range as the 25th anniversary season opens with a bang beneath the majestic 600 foot cliffs of Palo Duro Canyon near Amarillo and Canyon.

Each evening as the sun sets two horsemen will again ride the rim of the cliff, and to the sound of a lone bugle, unfurl the American and Texas flags. Below, elaborate costumed dancers and singers "invite you all to come to 'TEXAS.'"

Written by Pulitzer Prize winning author Paul Green, "TEXAS" is a romantic story of the settling of the area. A cast of 80 emphasizes the struggles between the ranchers and farmers and their battles with nature. The eventual collaboration sparks a railroad, a new town and prosperity for the hardy pioneers.

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This year a total electrical renovation of the theatre combined with the latest in sound and light technology has created a new environment for Director Neil Hess and Disneyland designers D. Scott Linder and L. Lynn Hart.

Effects often appear so real that both animals and spectators can't tell the difference. Umbrellas pop during a storm scene as a lightning bolt strikes the canyon wall, exploding a tree that burns and sizzles.

Much to the surprise of the technicians, when the simulated cricket and bird sounds appear on tape, the real animals awaken and can't be "turned off."

The stage manager remembers the appearance of a real coyote during the simulated howl sounds. And there was the family of quail that faithfully stole the scene on several evenings when they strolled across the stage.

Even the rehearsed action doesn't stay on stage, as performers scale cliffs and ride horses. Indians perch on rocks, surreys and wagons weave across the prairie, and even an authentic train appears during the finale.

Intricate choreography is unveiled in a raging prairie fire ballet that burns and turns in a hazy glow of lights and wild red, glittery costumes during a dream sequence.

The star of the show remains the breathtaking, enormous cliff that serves as the backdrop for the show. During the production, it is enjoyed, spotlighted, scaled, twinkled and highlighted with grand finale fireworks.

Of course no star stands alone. The cast comes from across

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the southwest, drawn by the lure of playing before near full houses that average 1,600 persons each night. Another 60 work as technicians, costumers, reservationists, ushers and concessionaires.

Famous for its West Texas friendliness, the company adds special touches to keep visitors returning year after year. A map of hometowns is pinned and bristles from east to west. The chow call triangle, awarded nightly to the person coming the longest distance, has not been given to a person in the United States in 23 years and now seldom is received by a European.

An optional real chuckwagon beef barbecue is served prior to every performance, and area towns occasionally provide pre-entertainment in the patio area.

Buses receive red carpet treatment with tours of Palo Duro Canyon on request and a sad farewell and an enthusiastic invitation to return.

And return they do. Statistics show that over half of the audience comes back to see "TEXAS." Over 80% of the visitors travel more than 100 miles to see the show with two million people having seen the production since 1966. Another 100,000 guests came in 1989 from every state and 93 foreign countries, making "TEXAS" the outdoor drama with the largest attendance.

"TEXAS" is produced by the non-profit Texas Panhandle Heritage Foundation, Inc. with membership and board members from all 40 surrounding counties.

Much of the credit for the immense popularity of "TEXAS" belongs to a visionary named Margaret Harper. Harper along with

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the original directors Bill and Margaret Moore read about Paul Green and his outdoor dramas in a 1960 issue of READER'S DIGEST entitled "As Big As All Outdoors."

Harper wrote Green the letter that tempted him to see this "glorious canyon" and to write the script for "TEXAS." Meanwhile Harper formed the foundation and enlisted its members to raise the money to build the Pioneer Amphitheatre. "TEXAS" remains the only outdoor drama that pays a portion of its revenue to the state. Although ticket sales cover operating expenses, all renovation and expansion funds come from grants and donations from loyal individuals and foundations.

Gala receptions, a medley of prizes and bright, new show additions highlight the anniversary festivities throughout the season which begins June 13th.

"TEXAS" plays nightly except Sundays at 8:30 p.m. through August 25th. Reservations are encouraged and obtained by writing "TEXAS" at Box 268, Canyon, Texas 79015 or calling 806-655-2181. Tickets are \$10, \$8 and \$6 for adults and \$10, \$4 and \$3 for children under 12 years old. Group discounts are available.

Following the patriotic, emotional grand finale, visitors often remark, "Now we understand your state better. Now we see why you are as you are."

Harper adds, "This is the best praise "TEXAS" can receive."



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January 5, 1990

Dear Editor,

During the 1990 season "TEXAS" will celebrate its silver anniversary beneath the unusual and colorful setting of craggy 600 foot cliffs in Palo Duro Canyon near Amarillo and Canyon, and we invite you to share in the festivities.

Written by Pulitzer Prize winning author Paul Green, "TEXAS" is historical romance highlighting the settling of the area that according to DALLAS MORNING NEWS writer Bill Marvel has "...more special effects than STAR WARS."

Where else can you see a storm so realistic that audiences pop umbrellas as the thunder sounds and jump simultaneously when lightning strikes a tree that explodes, sizzles and burns. How often can you find Indians on rocks, cowboys riding the range, and an authentic train as just one of a hundred large props.

Amazingly, the "TEXAS" cast of 80 plays to packed houses with an astounding 1,600 persons each night.

"TEXAS" visitors not only come from long distances, they return. Statistics indicate 80% of the audience travels over 100 miles and comes from every state and a 100 different foreign countries. Some make the production a yearly trip, while others plan vacations around the stop.

If this seems appropriate, we would welcome your writers and photographers or will gladly tailor a special feature for you. We have professional 70 MM grade color transparencies and black and white photographs on file. Just let us know your needs.

The 25th season opens June 13 and plays nightly except Sundays through August 25, 1990. Come see us!

Sincerely,

Patty Bryant
Publicist

Margaret Harper
Founder/Publicist

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