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Bruns Amphitheater Improved for Cal Shakes 2010 Season

By Lou Fancher



Construction site Photo Ohlen Alexander

of \$8.2.

Phase One will bring immediate relief for both patrons and artists. A new ticket office, cafe, theater store, plaza, landscaping, improved accessibility and yes, more bathrooms, will allow Cal Shakes to better serve audiences. Instead of dilapidated trailers, there is a Patron and Artists Center, with a living roof, artist dressing rooms, and climate control. The improvements are both large and small in scale. Replacing a large grab-bin is a blanket window, where volunteers will hand out blankets in an orderly fashion. "Sometimes the fog will come howling down the hills, so providing these sorts of amenities is the least we could do," says Campaign Manager Paul Doyle, demonstrating the project's attention to detail.

Doyle, leading a tour of the site, is clearly pleased with the progress. Just four months after breaking ground on October 19, 2009, the new 7,000-square foot Patron and Artists Center's skeleton is to the point that construction continues regardless of the weather. Eagerly tromping through the mud, Doyle points to the expansive windows, the carefully laid electrical conduits and pipes, the space for showers, the costume storage and laundry facilities. Outside, the plaza has been re-graded, the trailers removed, roads have been widened, and stacks of dry wall are cause for celebration, signaling a next-step in the production.

Artists returning to perform at the venue will also have reason to cheer. "What has been challenging has been trying to provide protection from the outdoor elements for our artists," Falk says, understating the case. "We were hiring the best actors and artisans, but with that caliber, there was just so much they could put up with," agrees Doyle. What the actors have been putting up with is a moldy, cement holding cell, (fantastically referred to as "the green room,") underneath the stage. Painted blue with varying success, the space is as unlike the new green room as political campaign speeches are from Hamlet's "To be or not to be-" soliloquy. This June, actors will no longer dodge drips, but will make their entrances from the expansive, window-lined green room in the nearby Patron and Artists Center.

What won't change about Cal Shakes is the artistic focus and the organization's financial integrity. Phase One included a \$700,000 reserve to make sure working capital was covered. It also included steps to prepare the infrastructure for Phase 2, which will upgrade the production facilities within the amphitheater. Falk points out that campaign fundraising has not adversely affected general operations funding. Jonathan Moscone, supported by a dedicated staff and generous donors, remains at the helm: the captain of a ship no longer in danger of sinking under water.

Cal Shakes 2010

The Cal Shakes season begins in June with the World Premiere of John Steinbeck's *The Pastures of Heaven*, adapted by Octavio Solis and developed in collaboration with Word for Word Performing Arts Company; directed by Jonathan Moscone (June 2 - June 27)

Also coming this season:

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Mrs. Warren's Profession, by George Bernard Shaw; directed by Timothy Near (July 7-August 1)

Macbeth, by William Shakespeare; directed by Joel Sass (August 18-September 12)

Much Ado About Nothing, by William Shakespeare; directed by Jonathan Moscone (September 22-October 17)

For more information go to www.calshakes.org

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