

= Portland Center Stage =

Portland Center Stage ( PCS ) is a theater company based in Portland , Oregon , United States . Theater productions are presented at the Gerding Theater at the Armory in Portland 's Pearl District . PCS was founded in 1988 as the northern sibling of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland , Oregon . It became an independent theater in 1993 and in 1994 Elizabeth Huddle became producing artistic director . Chris Coleman took over in 2000 as the company 's fourth artistic director . Coleman hired design firm Sandstrom Design to help refocus the marketing strategy of PCS and increased the variety of productions .

The company began a capital campaign in 2004 , and in 2006 moved into the Portland Armory , which includes two theaters , production facilities and office space . PCS puts on between seven and ten productions annually between September and June , and productions include classical , contemporary and premiere pieces . PCS has received positive commentary in regional guidebooks including Best Places Northwest , Best Places Portland and Moon Handbooks Oregon .

= = History = =

= = = 1988 ? 2000 = = =

Portland Center Stage was founded in 1988 , and was the " northern sibling " of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival ( OSF ) in Ashland , Oregon , and continued as a branch of OSF until 1994 . The company was originally known as " Oregon Shakespeare Festival Portland " . Its first production was Heartbreak House . Dennis Bigelow was PCS 's first artistic director and was let go by the OSF in 1992 . A two @-@ year transitional process began in 1993 , during which the OSF maintained a supervisory role over PCS . The Oregonian reported that the OSF 's artistic director Henry Woronicz " couldn 't figure out how to integrate the two closely enough for his liking , and he was unwilling to have Portland go its own way without supervision " .

The advisory board for Oregon Shakespeare Festival Portland was reformulated as the board of directors of the PCS , and Elizabeth Huddle was hired in May 1994 as the producing artistic director . Huddle had previously served on the PCS 's search committee for a new artistic director , but decided to put her name in for consideration . In 1994 the PCS had a budget of US \$ 2 @.@ 2 million , and over 11 @,@ 000 subscribers .

In May 1995 the company 's financial numbers for its transitional 1994 ? 1995 period with its new artistic director were reported to be a deficit of \$ 240 @,@ 000 . The company experienced what The Oregonian described as a " jarring divorce " from the OSF . Huddle had been on the 1991 search committee for the OSF 's artistic director Henry Woronicz , but he suddenly announced his resignation in June 1995 effective the following October citing " personal reasons " . Huddle and the rest of the theater community were surprised by Woronicz 's resignation . In 2000 PCS board president Julie Vigeland commented to The Seattle Times that after separating from OSF " it was a real challenge to form our own identity " , but that Huddle " did a wonderful job helping us do that for the last six years " .

= = = 2000 ? present = = =

Its fourth artistic director Chris Coleman took over in May 2000 , and recruited experienced actors to the company . Coleman had previously co @-@ founded Actor 's Express in Atlanta , Georgia , and was the artistic director there . Coleman initially signed on for a three @-@ year contract . Before Coleman began as artistic director with PCS , the company was already the largest live theater production company in Portland . However , the organization was facing sporadic attendance at performances as well as financial difficulties , with a deficit at the end of 1999 of \$ 700 @,@ 000 . In 2000 PCS had a deficit of \$ 880 @,@ 000 and a base of 10 @,@ 000 subscribers . The financial position of the company later stabilized , and Coleman had a 2000 budget of \$ 3 @.@

2 million to work with when he came on . A 2003 consultant 's report , however , found that PCS relied more heavily on gifts and grants to fund its operations than its peers around the company .

Coleman hired the Portland company Sandstrom Design to help with marketing . Sandstrom helped to improve the promotional materials of the organization , while Portland Center Stage modified the nature and style of its performances . Sandstrom Design produced a 56 @-@ page flyer that showed the performance schedule for the 2003 ? 2004 season which was mailed to subscribers , potential customers , handed out at performances and placed around town . The promotional campaign stressed the unique qualities of a live theater performance as entertainment over television and film . PCS 's productions were presented in the Winningstad and Newmark theatres in Portland through the 2005 ? 2006 season . Portland Center Stage moved to the new Gerding Theater at the Armory beginning with the 2006 ? 2007 season .

Portland Center Stage began a \$ 32 @. @ 9 million capital campaign in 2004 , with the goal of building a new theater complex in the Portland Armory , a historic building in Portland . The company began usage of the Portland Armory space in September 2006 . PCS received \$ 150 @, @ 000 from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development in September 2006 for " renovations and upgrades to its facility " , and an additional \$ 500 @, @ 000 as part of the " Portland Center Stage Armory Theater Energy Conservation Project " .

The theater facilities at the Portland Armory include " a 599 @-@ seat main stage theater , a smaller , 200 @-@ seat black box theater , administrative offices , a rehearsal hall and production facilities " . The main theater in the Portland Armory is called the Gerding Theater . Seven productions are performed annually , from September through May . The company 's productions include contemporary , classical pieces and modern premieres , in addition to a summer playwrights festival , JAW ( previously known as Just Add Water / West ) . PCS has approximately 8 @, @ 000 subscribers and an annual audience of over 90 @, @ 000 .

= = Productions = =

When Elizabeth Huddle became producing artistic director in 1994 , a production schedule had already been set by the OSF 's Pat Patton . Huddle made changes to her first season 's schedule and decided to direct the first play of the season *Arms and the Man* , instead of the previously scheduled play Jean Anouilh 's translation of Sophocles ' *Antigone* . Portland Center Stage was nominated for " Best Production " in the 1994 ? 95 Drammy Awards which recognize excellence in Portland theater , for *Arms and the Man* .

Huddle was artistic director for the world premiere of the play *Comfort and Joy : A Play in Two Acts* , which premiered at PCS on December 2 , 1995 . Huddle had commissioned playwright Jack Heifner to write *Comfort and Joy* , which was the first time that Portland Center Stage had ever produced a new play . Huddle ended her time with the Portland Center Stage company in January 2000 . One of Huddle 's final productions with PCS was *A Christmas Carol* , and her final production with the company was *Bus Stop* .

Chris Coleman 's first production after signing on with PCS in 2000 was the play *The Devils* by Elizabeth Egloff , based on the novel of the same name by Fyodor Dostoevsky . Theater critic Misha Berson of *The Seattle Times* described Coleman 's choice as " an especially audacious departure for Portland Center Stage " , though reviews in Portland media were mixed , it received a positive review in *The Oregonian* and from audience feedback . Other productions in the 2000 ? 2001 season included Martin McDonagh 's Irish comedy , *The Cripple of Inishmaan* , *A Christmas Carol* , Patrick Marber 's *Closer* , and adaptation of *Antigone* , and the Northwest premiere of *A New Brain* by William Finn .

Coleman opened the 2006 , 2007 and 2008 seasons at PCS with musicals . He opened the 2006 season with *West Side Story* , and the 2007 season with *Cabaret* . Other productions in the 2007 ? 2008 season included *Doubt* , a *Parable* , *Twelfth Night* , and *Sometimes a Great Notion* . PCS received a total of 12 awards at the 29th annual Drammy Awards in June 2008 , including " Outstanding Production " for *Twelfth Night* . Coleman opened the 2008 ? 2009 season with *Guys and Dolls* , which *The Oregonian* and *Willamette Week* described as a timely choice in light of the

Economic crisis of 2008 .

= = Reception = =

In her 2004 guide *Best Places Northwest* Giselle Smith wrote that PCS " offers excellent production values , whatever the play " . In his 2004 book *Best Places Portland* , author John Gottberg wrote positively of Portland Center Stage , commenting : " Portland 's leading professional theater company is on a par with the country 's best regional theaters . " The 2007 guidebook *Moon Handbooks Oregon* notes that the company : " produces innovative and sometimes daring productions " .