

SOJOURN

T H E A T R E

[About Us](#) | [Touring](#) | [Productions](#) | [2013 Adult Summer Institutes](#)

production history

7 Great Loves

August 22, 2003

Untraditional, award-winning play reopens

Richard Wattenberg Special to The Oregonian

Portlanders get another chance to see Sojourn Theatre's successful winter show "7 Great Loves."

Once again, Michael Rohd and his Sojourn colleagues turn the top three floors of the historic riverside B&O Warehouse into a venue for exciting theater.

The play, which received 2002-03 Portland Drammy Awards for outstanding direction, ensemble work, choreography, lighting and overall production, provides a small audience -- only 20 each performance -- with a unique theater experience in which movement, text, light and sound are magically interwoven.

More of a journey than a traditional play, viewers are guided up and down hallways and stairways into a variety of intriguing spaces -- even onto the building's roof (so wear comfortable shoes and dress for a night breeze).

Throughout, audiences witness a number of richly textured theatrical vignettes that are joined seamlessly into a thought-provoking and moving exploration on the nature of love in our contemporary post-industrial world.

Evolving out of interviews with seniors at Rose Schnitzer Manor, at-risk youths through the Save Our Youth program, local social workers and artists as well as with people on the street, the "love stories" that make up this piece may not be drawn into a tightly structured narrative line, but the cumulative effect of the whole is powerful.

The piece is receiving national attention. Funding from The Theater Communications Group is helping bring artistic directors from The Children's Theatre Company of Minneapolis, The Foundry Theatre in New York City, 7 Stages Theatre in Atlanta and several other companies to view this production, as well as other Portland theater works.

9:30 p.m. Thursdays and Sundays, 9:30 and 11:30 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, Aug. 22-Sept. 14, B&O Warehouse, Southeast Washington Street and Second Avenue; 971-544-0464; \$15. -- Richard Wattenberg Special to The Oregonian

June 10, 2003

Sojourn's '7 Great Loves' wins 5 Drammies

Bob Hicks – The Oregonian

"7 Great Loves," a "performance journey" that took audiences on a freight elevator to linked performances scattered through several stories of an old warehouse, was the big winner Monday night at the Drammy Awards.

Sojourn Theatre's site-specific piece won five Drammies, including outstanding production and outstanding direction (by Michael Rohd), in the annual celebration of the Portland theater season's best work. The ceremony was at the Benson Hotel.

Gaynor Sterchi, whose acting triumphs stretch back several decades in Portland, won a lifetime achievement award. Her most recent role was this season in Edward Albee's "Three Tall Women" at Profile Theatre.

Triangle Productions' "Hedwig and the Angry Inch" took three awards, including outstanding musical production and best actor in a musical for its star, Wade McCollum. McCollum returns in a revival of "Hedwig" opening Thursday.



March 5, 2003

WW Pick of the Week – 7 Great Loves

Steffen Silvis

Sojourn's latest creation is an imaginative piece of theatre in which the audience is taken on a physical, as well as imaginative, journey. The Sojourners transform the top floor and roof of a defunct warehouse into a labyrinth of tableaux through which you take an actual walking trip, with different scenes appearing as you move through the chamber. Exciting and inspiring theatre.



February 26, 2003

Theatre Review: 7 Great Loves

Steffen Silvis – Willamette Week

Sojourn Theatre's latest creation is an imaginative piece of promenade theatre, where the audience is taken on a physical, as well as imaginative, journey (a journey for which you'll want to dress warmly). Taking over the top floor and roof of a defunct warehouse near the river, the Sojourners have transformed the space into a labyrinth of tableaux where "love" is the only through-line. There's no Minotaur here except, perhaps, Loss: lost loves, missed opportunities, time. Especially time. In equal parts humorous and powerfully moving, the cast of 17, led by artistic director Michael Rohd (a Theseus who leaves and must return to his Ariadne), spin worlds out of worlds. One moment the audience members are in an intimate suburban kitchen hearing a tale of true love in wartime, soon after they are on top of the building, with the panorama of Portland before them, watching a solitary couple waltz on an adjoining rooftop. Most of the stories heard on the journey are taken from interviews the company conducted with a diverse group of people. Perhaps the most arresting are the short stories from a group of old people stalled at a rest home (the story performed by Emily Lambert is quite unforgettable). One of the last stops in this maze of sound and images is to a small room where the audience is invited to write the things they love, have loved, on the wall. Is it too much to hope that these declarations in turn spawn a 14, 21 and 28 Great Loves?

February 21, 2003

Audience's Journey Is At the Heart of Sojourn Theatre's Unique '7 Great Loves'

Richard Wattenberg, Special Writer - The Oregonian

Valentine's Day has come and gone, but Portland's Sojourn Theatre Company keeps the spotlight on matters of the heart with its original ensemble piece "7 Great Loves."

This new play may be about love, but it is not meant as a belated sugary-sweet candy-gram. Performed on the top three stories of the very unromantic old B&O Warehouse (located near the Morrison Bridge on the east bank of the Willamette), "7 Great Loves" should, nonetheless, prove to be a unique theatrical event -- one that will literally take audiences on what Sojourn's founding artistic director, Michael Rohd, calls a "performance journey."

Nontraditional theatrical experiences have been the hallmark of Sojourn productions, such as the site-specific, poetic

documentaries "The Justice Project" (summer 2001) and "Hidden" (spring 2002). Both intertwined movement and text to address serious social concerns: The former, performed in a courtroom at the Gus Solomon United States Courthouse, explored the sometimes contradictory ways that Portlanders understand "Justice," and the latter, presented at the Anne Frank exhibit in Lloyd Center mall, dealt with hate and prejudice not only as they appeared in Nazi Germany but also as they still haunt us.

Although these earlier works concentrated on what separates us from one another, "7 Great Loves" shifts gears. In preparing for this new work, Rohd explains, he and other Sojourn members "really felt as a company and as members of this community that it would be good to spend some time working on what brings us together."

While the production examines the ties that bind, it does so in Sojourn Theatre terms. Like "The Justice Project" and "Hidden," "7 Great Loves" evolved out of a lengthy collaborative process that started in a series of interviews and workshops with local community members.

Over the past year, company members have interviewed senior citizens at Rose Schnitzer Manor, at-risk youths through the Save Our Youth program, local social workers and artists, as well as people on the street -- all in an effort to gather a wide range of love stories. The creative task for the ensemble has been to distill key themes from these stories without

wide range of love stories. The creative task for the ensemble has been to distill key themes from these stories without falling back on clichés and to weave these themes into a complexly textured performance piece.

The company is well-equipped to meet this challenge. In addition to past Portland performances, it recently completed a Ford Foundation-funded project, "Passing Glances," which explored the interaction of arts and civic dialogue in Allen County, Ohio. Rohd himself is the protégé of and sometime collaborator with internationally respected theater artist Ping Chong, with whom Rohd co-authored the play "Truth & Beauty." Rohd also has ties with exciting, nationally known theater groups such as Chicago's Lookingglass Theatre and Los Angeles' Cornerstone Theatre.

Given director Rohd's background and that of collaborating artists such as Bobby Bermea, Jamie Rea, Rebecca Martinez and dancer Paige McKinney, "7 Great Loves" promises to be a wonderfully multilayered show. In describing the work, Rohd says, "There are large-scale movements, there is story-telling, there are naturalistic scenes, there are projections -- it uses a lot of different styles or forms." Perhaps more than other Sojourn productions, this show, Rohd says, depends on a richly imagistic approach, on "physical and visual metaphor."

Most importantly, "7 Great Loves" is a journey. During it, Rohd says, the audience (20 per performance) "will move from space to space," roaming through various rooms, hallways and compartments and even onto the roof (so dress warmly) of the B&O Warehouse. Traveling through and interacting with different spaces is meant to deepen the audience's understanding that "we all have different experiences of love in our lives, and they happen in different places with different people in different contexts."

Rohd suggests that "to remain open to love in one's life, to be present to love even when experiences of love tell you it's going to be as much pain as joy . . . is one of the largest through-lines of the show," but finally the goal is not a play with a neat narrative line and a neat moral. Comparing the intended impact of "7 Great Loves" to a beautiful symphony, Rohd says, "There's not a narrative, but there are movements, and even if it doesn't tell you a story, you go through different-colored experiences . . . In the end you hopefully have gone somewhere."

971.544.0464 - 2005 Company Brochure - Preview Michael Rohd's book

DONATE NOW THROUGH **Network for Good**