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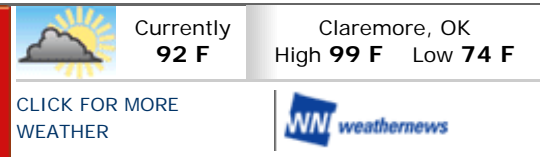
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Published July 28, 2006 06:32 pm - A state-of-the-art fine arts facility for Claremore schools will become a reality this week with the opening of the Robson Performing Arts Center.

The making of a dream come true

Robson PAC opens with 'Beauty and the Beast'

Rebecca Hattaway

A state-of-the-art fine arts facility for Claremore schools will become a reality this week with the opening of the Robson Performing Arts Center.

For the inaugural performance, the Professional Oklahoma Shakespearean Festival Touring Company will present four performances of "Beauty and the Beast," Friday, Aug. 4 through Sunday, Aug. 6.

Benefactor Frank Robson and the Claremore Public Schools Foundation will cut the ribbon at 7 p.m. prior to Friday's Grand Opening performance.

"Beauty and the Beast is an appropriate opening for this facility because it's a fairytale and this center is a fairytale — a dream come true," Robson said.

The Oklahoma Shakespearean Festival is a repertory company that brings professional actors and musicians together with students training for a professional career in the arts.

Over two and half decades ago, a teacher had a dream ... to bring quality theater productions to rural Oklahoma. Molly Risso created the nationally recognized theater summer festival that brings professional actors and musicians to Oklahoma communities.



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Although Risso passed away over five years ago, her spirit lives on as the festival mounts its 27th season.

“Molly was my teacher and mentor,” said Robson Performing Arts Center Director, Ruby Quinn. “She set the bar high with her standards in theater for the people of Oklahoma. She believed in the necessity of a quality arts education for children, and they in turn will foster the arts as they grow, whether it is as an audience member or on stage as a performer. That is why it seems so perfect to have the Oklahoma Shakespearean Festival help us inaugurate the center as we share these goals so close to our hearts.”

Based out of Southeastern Oklahoma State University in Durant, the festival produces a full season of shows, including two Shakespearean productions and a dinner theater. Their biggest show of the season, “Beauty and the Beast” will perform in Claremore as a fundraiser for the Claremore Public Schools Foundation.

This musical extravaganza includes such Disney favorites as “Be Our Guest,” and of course “Beauty and the Beast.”

The festival’s managing director, Riley R. Coker is excited to tour their production to the center. “We share Claremore’s goals in bringing quality performing arts to the community and we are honored to help inaugurate this one-of-a-kind center for the arts,” Coker said.

The much-anticipated Robson Performing Arts Center is undergoing finishing touches as it prepares for the Grand Opening.

“I’m thrilled that the community will be able to be part of the opening of wonderful facility,” Quinn said. “They will be able to see the tremendous opportunities and possibilities this will mean for the community.”

The center is a gift from Robson and his wife, Ludmila, to the students of Claremore Public Schools for their education and enjoyment. The building will house daily band, choir, and theater classes.

“I like what Larry Downey, musical director of Jenks Public Schools, said about the importance of fine arts education, ‘Musical performance instills confidence, commitment, public presentation skills, discipline and creative cooperation — invaluable skills that last a lifetime,’” Robson said.

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