

This is the Missouri State Journal, featuring interviews on a variety of topics with members of the Missouri State University community.

Missouri State University's 10th theater is preparing for its 64th season with two summer productions. A temporary set up shaped by campus construction and an eye towards a bigger 65th anniversary season next year. Sarah Wigg'in is the artistic director of the Tent Theater and a full professor at Missouri State's Department of Theater and Dance.

So we are having to have another pivot year with tent theater. We are only able to offer two shows this year because we still don't have a scene shop. And we have, limited to no access to Craig Hall, during the summer.

So, we are doing, our first show will be around the world in 80 days. It is based off of the very famous novel by Jules Verne, and it's just a fun romp with six actors playing all of the roles. So it should be a fun comedy. And then we move on to beehive, the musical, and that is a musical revue that celebrates, women vocalists, women songwriters, women singers of the 60s.

We did do that show in 2021 but this time we get to have it as it was meant to be at least here at tent theater outside, with everybody out enjoying what I hope will be beautiful weather and, you know, celebrating those fabulous songs of the 60s. So we're bringing it back by demand.

This smaller season is not just a scheduling decision. It reflects what is possible while construction continues. And while the tent theater company works without the usual access to major production spaces.

We are dealing with small casts. We are dealing with, shows that can be, presented without great deal of scenery. We, rely heavily on our LED wall when, we have to, you know, have no scenery.

And, and these were really great opportunities. You know, around the world in 80 days, there's an element that's somewhat cinematic because it just moves from place to place to place so quickly. Right. That like a great big box set doesn't actually really serve the storytelling. So that makes it a really great choice for us this year.

And then, beehive, being a musical revue, it's not set in again. One stationary place. It's, a little more concert style format. There is, of course, dialog and narration, but it is primarily a musical revue. So the focus really is on the, songs that we get to celebrate from that time period.

Even in a pivot year, tent theater continues a long tradition of outdoor summer performance at Missouri State.

Tent theater, used to be performed in a circus tent. That's how it got its name and, it is a summer theater. It has evolved over 64 years, as you might imagine.

And it is, beloved by the community. Obviously, the community has been such terrific supporters of it for 64 years. And, you know, there was a time when, the Koger Theater, which is housed in Craig Hall, came online and there was a discussion about moving the summer programming indoors where we could control the weather and we could control the lights and the sounds and everything else.

And it was air conditioned. And the community balked at it. They were like, no, we want our picnics before and we want to be outside and all of that other kind of, you know, wonderful environment that they get to experience every year at Tent theater. So it never moved indoors, and it stayed in a tent until, the John Goodman Amphitheater, was finally opened in fall of 2022.

With the 65th season coming next year. Wiggins says the hope is that audiences will see this summer as a beginning

We are hoping to celebrate, big, we hope that the new building will be ready to roll. We hope Craig will be in fully functioning again. So all of that will be available. We will be back to three shows. We hope they'll be larger shows, you know, so, you know, I hope that we're going to be able to celebrate that the goal of that corner is going to be the front porch of Missouri State University.

You know, we do sell out. And so, hopefully, you know, be on the ball and you won't miss out this summer.

For more information and season tickets, visit tenttheatre.MissouriState.edu

I'm Emily Doll and this has been the Missouri State Journal.

Thanks for listening.

Contact the Missouri State University Office of Strategic Communications for more information. You can find this and other Missouri State Journal episodes@ksmu.org.