

theater

# 'Quilters' tells, sings story of life on prairie



Casey A. Cass / University of Colorado

The play "Quilters" documents the "harsh life" of a pioneer family.

**By Kate Jonuska**  
For the Camera

While the lives of the powerful are recorded in history books, the stories of everyday people are often told through different channels.

In the case of the homesteaders of the Great Plains, storytelling was often done through fabric, their histories captured in quilts created by pioneer women. And through its production of "Quilters," running Feb. 14-23, CU Presents will tell the history of a pioneer family — specifically one woman and her six daughters — solely through their quilting.

"The conceit is that each quilt block, each square of the quilt, represents an event or a significant series of events," says Lynn Nichols,

## If You Go

**What:** "Quilters," a musical from CU Presents

**When:** 7:30 p.m. Feb. 14-15 and Feb. 19-22; matinees at 2 p.m. Feb. 16 and Feb. 23

**Where:** University Theatre, 1595 Pleasant St., University of Colorado-Boulder campus

**Tickets:** \$19 general admission, \$17 CU students, \$5 high-school students

**Info:** 303-492-8181 or theatredance.colorado.edu

who directs the previously Tony Award-nominated musical for the fourth time in his career. Over the course of the play, 16 blocks are revealed and, therefore, 16 stories are told, with all the characters acted out by the

seven women on stage.

"It creates an emotional connection with the sweep of a life," Nichols says, explaining that the theater's raked stage (it slopes downward toward the audience) creates an intimacy with the women's stories of immigration, natural disasters, courtship, parenthood, joy and tragedy.

"It was a pretty harsh life," he says, but also a touching and beautiful one, much like the unique, mostly choral score. "Sometimes there's even seven-part choral singing. It's really beautiful. Every time I've done it, I had to seek out people who can sing with that level of musicianship."

This production of "Quilters" stars Tamara Meneghini, CU performing arts professor and Denver Post

## Quilting exhibit

The timing of the Front Range Contemporary Quilters' 25th anniversary exhibition and the stage production of "Quilters" was purely luck, according to Judith Trager, a longtime member and former president of FRCQ. However, she adds, the coincidence only proves "that quilt-making is alive and well and that it's an ongoing art, a living art."

Showing at The Dairy Center for the Arts, 2590 Walnut St., now through March 7, the juried quilting exhibition features 31 pieces of fiber art created by FRCQ artists. As opposed to the traditional quilting discussed in the musical "Quilters," FRCQ is dedicated to art quilts, which are less rigidly structured and more varied in technique.

Trager explains, "Today's art quilters have more to say on top of the beauty of the work they create. They're trying to tell stories differently and in a quite contemporary way."

Find out more about the exhibit and art quilting on the FRCQ website, [artquilters.org](http://artquilters.org).

Ovation Award winner, in the role of the mother, Sarah. Also, for this performance, a new quilt block was commissioned from local quilter Judith Trager, whose art-quilt work is currently on display at the "Celebrating 25 Years of Front Range Contemporary Quilters" exhibit at The Dairy Center for the Arts.

"Quilters" really is the best of storytelling," says director Nichols, who explains that much of the dialogue was culled from interviews with real women in the book "The Quilters: Women and Domestic Art." "It's such a from-the-heart kind of show that it's a real joy to work on and to see."