

# 'Seussical' was top draw of Theatre in the Park season

By JOE HENDERSON  
Special to The Star

"Seussical," the musical adaptation of the Dr. Seuss children's books, edged out "The Sound of Music" as the top draw of the 2011 season at The Theatre in the Park.

"Seussical" drew 9,913 people — 658 more than "The Sound of Music" did. The school version of "Les Misérables," with cast made up entirely of actors 19 and younger, drew 7,959 people and "Aida," an adaptation of Giuseppe Verdi's opera, played before an audience of 5,962.

The 2011 attendance was 33,089, about 7,000 less than 2010's turnout.

For at least this year, Theatre in the Park canceled the annual Demmi Awards ceremony that has traditionally recognized the season's best performances.

"Frankly, I don't think it's productive to have competition among our performers and directors," said Tim Bair, in his first year as producing artistic director. "I like to think we're one big family. And, after all, who's to say who was best in their role? Our performers are not professionals. To single out a few as being 'the best' can unnecessarily cause hurt feelings."

The future of awards will be discussed with the Theatre Advisory Council before a final de-

cision is made, Bair said.

Bair said he wasn't surprised "Seussical" led the season's attendance. "It's such a good family show, very kid oriented," he said. "I was disappointed 'Aida' and 'Les Misérables' didn't draw better."

Bair cited excessive heat as a factor during the last five weeks of the season.

"The temperature was over 100 degrees on stage for most of that time," he said. "One performance of the season's opening show, 'The Sound of Music,' was rained out and there were storm warnings nearly every evening it ran. I'm sure the threat of bad weather kept people at home."

He's optimistic about the 2012 season, in which the theater will produce five shows instead of the customary four.

"Historically, The Theatre in the Park has drawn well on family-oriented shows. That will continue next year with the Disney double bill 'The Jungle Book' and 'Sleeping Beauty' produced as a two-act show and 'You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown,'" Bair said.

"But we'll also offer three

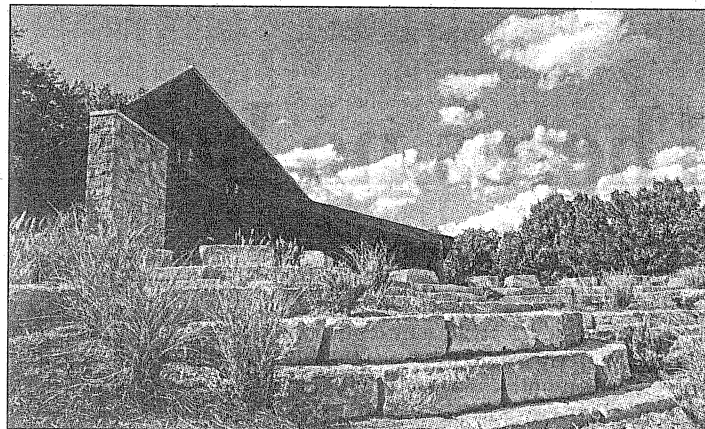


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE THEATRE IN THE PARK

**The pavilion next to The Theatre in the Park can be rented for \$500, accommodating up to 500 people.**

more-adult shows in 'Sweeney Todd,' 'Sweet Charity' and 'Urinetown,' which we hope will attract larger audiences," he said.

Bair was pleased with the interest shown in a pavilion next to The Theatre in the Park that people can rent for \$500. The area, which can accommodate 500 people, has been booked for 22 dates — including five weddings — so far for the season, which runs from May until mid-October.

The pavilion, which has been available for its first full season,

has restrooms, a tall stone fireplace and a fire pit. Alcoholic beverages are allowed with a permit from the Parks and Recreation District.

"We're flexible. People can bring in their own food, cook it themselves or have caterers. Same is true of entertainment — bring a band if you like," Bair said. "At one of the weddings this year the family brought in a mobile home so the bride and other wedding members could dress in comfort. People do have to pick up when they leave."

## THE ARTS

### A look back at the season

The Cat in the Hat and "Seussical" were the top attraction this summer at The Theatre in the Park.

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