

on stage

# 'White Snake' is sssscintillating

A COMMUNITY FESTIVAL!

blue marble

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**T**ake a 1,000-year-old Chinese legend, good story-telling, excellent directorial choices, delightful acting, inspired stage effects, creative costumes and props — all accompanied by resonant live music — and CATS once again has produced an entertainment definitely worth seeing in "The White Snake."

In this charming and witty fable, written by Mary Zimmerman and initially commissioned and produced by the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the White Snake, a supernatural spirit who has lived for centuries acquiring knowledge, has a longing to experience the world of humans. So she transforms herself into a beautiful woman and, with her companion, Green Snake, ventures down from her ancestral mountain



**HINDI GREENBERG**  
Columnist

and falls in love with Xu Xian, a humble apothecary assistant. Soon the two marry and open a pharmacy where White Snake's healing powers become famous, drawing the attention of Fa Hai, an evil monk who looks unkindly on the relationship of a spirit and a human and who schemes to sabotage the happiness of Xu Xian and White Snake. Combining gentle scenes of marital bliss, often portrayed with stylized movements, with inventive warfare and mythical creatures, expands the storytelling from a love story to a morality tale.

#### LARGE THEATER PROJECT

Each year CATS bites off a large theater project to present, but this is one of their most creative and self-assured productions. Confidently helmed by director Carolyn Howarth, a former member of the late, lamented Foothill Theatre Company, she has imaginatively integrated the many moving parts of this complex creation so that it flows seamlessly. The gorgeous, intricate costumes designed by Jill Kelly, along with the intriguing and visually interesting props by Dennis Deusing and Lisa Moon, exquisite hair and makeup by Kay Drake, and fantastical and fun puppets by Richard Bay, all effectively transport the audience into the fanciful world of the White Snake legend. The simple set and lush lighting, both designed by Tim Dugan, are complimented by the mystical and haunting music composed and directed by Tynowyn Woolman and performed stage-side



PHOTO BY DAVID G. WONG

A scene from "The White Snake," a show running through May 6 at Nevada Theatre.

by her, along with Lisa Stine and Andjru Werderitsch. And all technical aspects, here quite complex, are competently headed by Tom Taylor.

#### TALENTED CAST

The cast is led by the talented Lyra Dominguez, imbuing the beautiful, loving White Snake with grace and kindness. She is superbly matched by Olivia Pritchett, imparting humorous feistiness and sass to Green Snake. The triangle of friendship is ably completed by T.E. Wolfe's Xu Xian, who complicates the love relationship with his doubts (cleverly illuminated by a character with amazingly long fingernails periodically hovering behind and scratching at him). Jon Enos excellently conveys the villainous character of Fa Hai, the monk. The remainder of the 12 member cast greatly contribute to the flow, fantasy, humor and beauty of the production.

CATS once again has presented the community with a compelling, complex, mystical, funny, loving and visually beautiful production. This play will continue at the Nevada Theatre, through May 6, but I'd advise getting tickets early because word of mouth will soon sell out the seats for this extravaganza. For information, see [www.catsweb.org](http://www.catsweb.org)

*Hindi Greenberg worked with theatrical props, costume and makeup in high school and college, so she appreciates when those effects are well-done and well-utilized, as in this production.*