



Pontine Theatre presents
THE COUNTRY OF THE POINTED FIRS
29 January - 7 February

29 January - 7 February, Pontine Theatre presents its original stage adaptation of Sarah Orne Jewett's 1896 masterpiece, **The Country of the Pointed Firs**. The production is underwritten by Piscataqua Savings Bank and supported by grants from the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts. Performances will take place at Pontine's West End Studio Theatre, 959 Islington Street, Portsmouth NH. Tickets are \$23 (\$20 for seniors & students), and may be purchased online at www.pontine.org. For information contact Pontine: info@pontine.org, 603-436-6660.

Pontine Theatre's **The Country of the Pointed Firs** is an original adaptation of Sarah Orne Jewett's 19th century masterpiece. Using storytelling, music, puppets, and masks, Pontine creates a theatrical context for the work of this celebrated author, a native of South Berwick, Maine. Focusing on the experience of community, Pontine highlights Jewett's vision of life in a 19th century New England maritime village. A cast of Jewett characters is introduced through the course of the play: Mrs. Todd, a country woman whose knowledge of local herbs and traditional medicine earns her living; Mrs. Blackett, the

matriarch of Green Island who remains a child at heart; and Captain Littlepage, who is haunted by memories of his strange adventures at sea. Pontine's collage of poetic movement, intimate stories, pastoral imagery, and traditional melodies pays homage to the simple beauty and insight of Sarah Orne Jewett's writing. Pontine's adaptation combines the use of commedia dell'arte-style masks and Bunraku-style puppets with conventions of Victorian toy theater to portray the many visits and journeys that make up the novel. Set within the traditional "woman's world" of Mrs. Todd's kitchen, trips up country and over the water are acted out in miniature on her counter and table, with remnants accumulating in tableau through the course of the play, like the narrator's impressions and memories.

The Country of the Pointed Firs was originally published in 1896 and over the course of the past century it has been enjoyed by a wide readership. In her introduction to the 1925 edition, Willa Cather said:

*"If I were asked to name three American books which have the possibility of a long, long life, I would say at once, **The Scarlet Letter**, **Huckleberry Finn**, and **The Country of the Pointed Firs**. The latter book seems to me fairly to shine with the reflection of its long joyous future. I can think of no others that confront time and change so serenely."*

Ms. Jewett was born in South Berwick, Maine in 1849 and died there in 1909. Her home is preserved by Historic New England and is open to the public June - October.