

theater

Slapstick

at the

Pocket

Playhouse

"You see a guy walk through here with a shotgun," asked the campus security officer.

"Nope."

"The dressing room's back there," further questioned the patrolman.

"Yeah."

"Oh God, I better get back there," said director Bill Gary.

And off rushed Gary to find out what devious events were transpiring backstage.

As it turned out, the uproar was over an actor in "Charlie," the play Gary's directing. Lance Cooley was seen trooping across campus with the gun and someone called in security.

(Said Cooley of the matter, "We use the gun in the play but we can't leave it at the theater because somebody will rip it off. So someone brings it to rehearsal each time. Going across campus, people were looking at me then trying to ignore that I had a gun. So I got into it, playing a little bit. You know, I stood up straight and started marching.")

"Rehearsal isn't always like this," assured Gary, "this is the biggest scandal we've had."

Rehearsal is for "Charlie," to be presented in the Pocket Playhouse Tuesday and Wednesday at 8 p.m.

Besides Cooley, who plays the grandson, Martin Treat, the oculist,

and David Pellman, the grandpa, are in the production.

"Charlie," a recent play by Slawomir Mrozek, is, according to Gary, "a farce. It's farcical and slapstick but is actually a serious social satire."

A short work lasting only 30 minutes, "Charlie" deals with an oculist who is visited by two patients, grandson and grandpa. Simply, the latter wants glasses so he can pursue what has been a family tradition—shooting.

Gary is doing "Charlie" in conjunction with a seminar in play direction. But while this is his first directorial effort, he has collected a fine cast.

Treat has appeared in numerous University productions, including the play "Cyrano." Currently working on his Masters in fine arts, Treat recently auditioned before the Theater Conference Group.

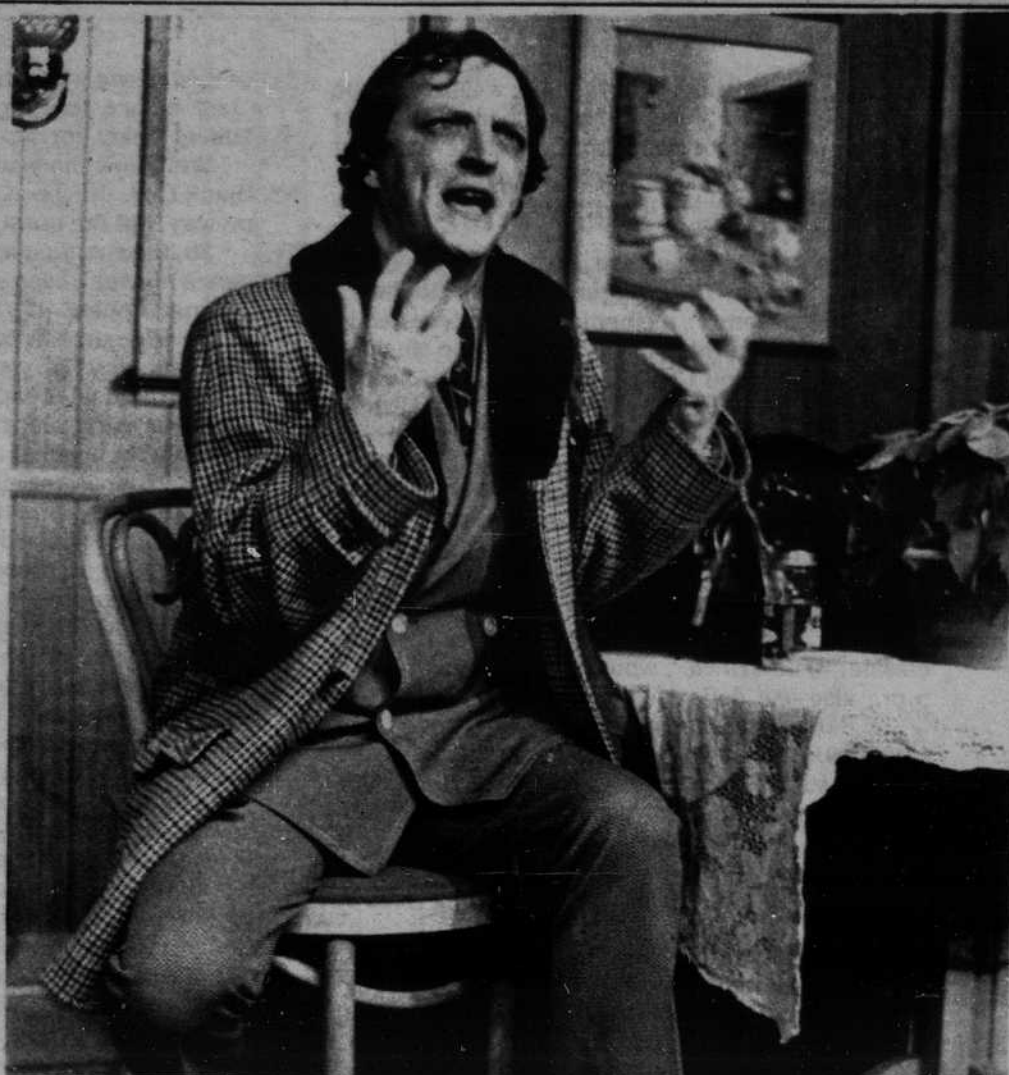
Though he's worked in productions of much more stature, Treat doesn't mind working with a student director like Gary. "It's not who is doing the play or where it's going to play, it's the nature of the task and not too many other considerations. As for the nature of this task it's the script. It's a good script. It doesn't matter it's being done in the Pocket Playhouse, I like the smaller scale, the smaller stage. It's more intimate."

At the other extreme is Cooley in only his second role. "I'm a novice, but it's just a matter of knowing what you're doing. I think I do, so I don't anticipate being any more nervous than anyone else. I don't expect to have a coronary. I hope not."

"Yeah, he's new," said Gary, "but I think he has a lot of potential. In the flyers we're billing Martin, David and then saying 'and introducing Lance Cooley'."

With only three actors and few props to contend with, Gary plans on taking "Charlie" "on the road. We plan to do it in other places than the Pocket Playhouse. Scarborough Faire for one. Christ, we'd do it at Autzen Stadium or at McArthur Court at halftime if the athletic department would let us. Wherever we do it, we're going to charge for admission."

For the moment, though, there is no admission charge.



Alan Wood as Jimmy Perry

Photo by Peter Grant

Dinner theater at the Eugene Hotel

Something new will be added to Eugene's theater spectrum tonight—dinner theater.

The Theater-at-Large at the Eugene Hotel will be performing "The Gingerbread Lady," an adult comedy by Neil Simon tonight through Sunday and again next Friday through Sunday.

Dinner theater is a fixture on the east coast, but fairly rare in the west. The Eugene Hotel's group will be the first such venture in Eugene.

The TAL production is directed by Lou Salerni.

Doors open for the productions at 5

p.m. Sundays, with dinner at 5:30 and the curtain at 6:30 p.m. All other nights, doors open at 7 p.m., dinner is at 7:30 p.m. and curtain is at 8:30.

Cocktails and wine cart are available.

The night's menu will include tossed green salad with baby shrimp, London roast, baked potato and sour cream, peas and pearl onions, dinner rolls and ice cream parfait.

Tickets are available at the hotel's main desk, 344-1461, for \$7 each.

Persons driving to the play can park in the hotel's lot at Broadway and High.

Fractured fairy tale at VLT

"Once Upon a Mattress," a lively and wacky musical comedy based on the old fairy tale about the princess and the pea, is currently playing at the Very Little Theatre.

Director Ed Chambers sees his production as a "fractured fairy tale" version of the story involving the princess who may swim the moat to gain entrance to a castle rather than wait demurely, the prince who may not be the ideal virile young man and the king and queen who may be less than benevolent.

The show revolves around the kingdom's search for a wife for the prince, due to an edict that nobody can get married until the prince does.

Sheila Johnson stars as Winifred, the tomboy princess, while Don Sutton plays Prince Dauntless. A small orchestra directed by Doug Anderson backs up the musical numbers which Chambers describes as ranging from "the big, exciting numbers to the soft, tender moments that can actually bring a tear to the eye."

Jennifer Pashkowski has directed the cast of 24 in choreography and Tom Durnell has designed the set.

"Mattress" will run tonight through Saturday, plus Feb. 6 through 10. Tickets (\$2) are available at the VLT box office, 2350 Hilyard St., Eugene, from noon to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and between 7 and 8:30 on performance nights. Curtain is at 8:15.



Prince Dauntless and Princess Winifred

Photo by Bruce Landrey