

Perhaps the state's best theater group

The New Theatre may well be Oregon's finest experimental theater group.

And their latest offering—"Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris"—doesn't fall short of such superlatives.

"Brel" is one of the most polished productions performed by one of the most talented casts to grace any of Oregon's stages in a long time.

The play isn't really a play—it's a presentation of 23 songs written by Brel.

There may be no plot and no characters—beyond man 1, man 2, woman 1 and woman 2—but each of the songs is a complete dramatic production in itself. The emotions of each of Brel's 23 songs are handled quite well and captured almost perfectly by the four member cast. Whether sung in singles, duets, trios or quartets, each song becomes a unique, moving experience, different than the other 22 yet combining to give you an indication of how Brel felt about the world around him.

Sabine Jerstad, Janine Morgan, Martin Brother and Richard Storm are each multi-talented individuals. Each can sing quite well and—more importantly for this play—each can add dramatic meaning to the songs they perform.

Brel's views of life vary from his very serious, anti-war commentary songs to his somewhat satirical, black humor looks at life. The two men

have the most outstanding parts in the first act—Storm's "Statue" and Brother's "Amsterdam" are each equally dramatic and quite good.

During the first act, the songs alternate between the serious and the jokingly serious.

But act two begins with a real bang. The first three numbers of that act may be the most dramatic of the play. If not, they combine for what is surely the most dramatic segment of the play.

The first, "Bulls," has Storm as the bullfighter drawing an allegory between bullfighting and war. As he swishes his cape and points his sword skyward the number concludes with: "Did not the bulls dream of some hell—Where men and worn-out matadors still burn—Or perhaps with their last breaths?—Would not they pardon us their deaths?—Knowing what we did at Carthage—Ole! Waterloo—Ole! . . . Hiroshima—Ole! Saigon!"

The act's beginning is followed by Morgan's "The Old Folks," about the elderly and "that old silver clock that waits for us all."

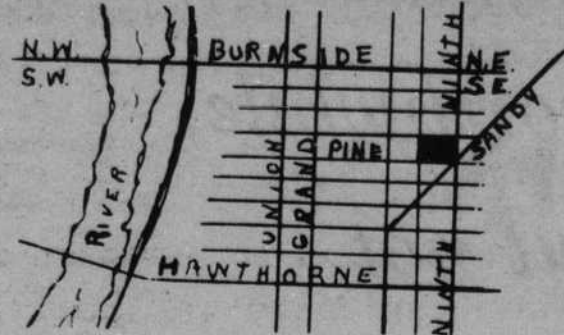
And then Jerstad's "Marieke," a moving, emotional Flemish ballad that she sings equally well in English and Flemish as she alternates languages. Her rich, full voice is at its best here—in what may amount to the high point of the show, coming as it does at the conclusion of the most dramatic portion.

You may be familiar with "Marieke" from Judy Collin's "Whales and Nightingales" album—which also includes Brel's "Sons Of" (which is in act one). Jerstad's version is better than that on the record. That says a lot.

Much of the credit for this outstanding bit of theater must go to director Judy Masee, who has evidently polished two completely unique casts in putting together two different but outstanding interpretations of the same play.

Also to be mentioned are the musicians—pianist Seth Wittner, percussionist Chris Tyle and flutist Suzy Fox. The music is consistently good throughout, although Fox's flute provides the real highlight.

If you get a chance to see this play in Portland by all means go. It is an outstanding bit of drama, a complex presentation of emotions through song that should not be missed. It may be a while before you'll see anything this good in Eugene.



"Brel" is performed at 8:30 p.m. in the Centenary-Wilbur Methodist Church (dark spot on map) Friday and Saturday nights.

To be assured of a seat, phone ahead (223-2256 or 244-6839) and reserve your seats. Tickets are \$3.25 for adults and \$2 for students.

If you don't make it to Portland before April 1, you may not be completely out of luck. The sets have been made to be portable and the cast is willing to take the show on the road anywhere in Oregon or Washington.

It might be worth your while to consider sponsoring "Brel" in Eugene. If you can get an auditorium, it should be full for this one.

Art Bushnell

Wittkow Presents
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THE FREAKS



AT THE WOODMEN OF THE
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8th & Lincoln Fri March 2
Showings: 6:30, 8:30 &
10:30 pm

Admission \$1.00

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in the
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THE BRIDGE THURSDAY, MARCH 1

A dramatic story told from the Germans' point of view and based on events which accompanied the end of WW II. This film relates the story of a group of children drafted into the German Army during the closing months of the war. A very moving anti-war film. Also, a short,

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

177 Lawrence. 7:00 and 9:15 P.M.

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k. gordon scott thinks mazzi's is the greatest little italian restaurant outside new york.

A true connoisseur knows the joys of a fast car, a good wine and an excellent restaurant. Like many others in this area he spends at least one night a week at Mazzi's. Gordon says "I've found that the finest cooks in the world have tables in New York and I think I was shocked at first that a restaurant so authentic and so concerned with its product was here in Eugene. It's on a par with any I've visited in New York and better than anything on this coast."

THE AUTHENTIC ITALIAN
RESTAURANT -- K. Gordon Scott
thinks Mazzi's is the greatest Italian
restaurant outside New York and we
appreciate his comments. Thank
you Gordon.

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