

Surface and Symbol

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Dylan Thomas opens at Eugene Hotel

People who know Dylan Thomas' play *Under Milk Wood* as a reader's theater piece are in for a big surprise when the show, directed by Randi Douglas, opens at the Eugene Hotel on November 19.

"I am exploring every possible idea," says Douglas, "that will give the actors exciting opportunities to work on total characterization and to make Thomas' moving and beautiful language a visual and energetic event."

Under Milk Wood, one of Thomas' last works before his death, is almost a film-like panorama of his childhood memories about the eccentric and unique personalities that live in a small Welsh fishing village. The script contains some of Thomas' best poetry, and, like Joyce's *Ulysses*, explores the fantasies and inward drives, as well as the comic daily routines, of a very strange array of small town characters.

Douglas, best known to Eugene audiences for her interpretation of James Joyce's *Molly Bloom*, says, "I have been extremely lucky to assemble a group of powerful and imaginative actors for this production. We are working out an ensemble performance style that has me more excited than any production I've worked on for the last five years."

Seven actors in *Under Milk Wood* share more than forty different speaking roles, often working with only a few seconds to make a complete change of character. Douglas is continuing her work with script adaptation, creating a new character out of the narration, which is Dylan Thomas himself. The improvisational character of the script suggested that the writer might be actually present as the play is performed.

"This addition allows the actors to explore their relationship between the writer and the world of his imagination," says Douglas, "presenting to the audience some of the common backstage struggles in a theatrical endeavor."

Jane Stevens-Jones, a special guest performer from the Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, is working as a mime, actress and choreographer for the production.

"Her special job is to interpret, through body movement, the sustaining poetic images in the script," Douglas explains, "and her unique approach is a continual inspiration."

Other actors in the company are well-known to Eugene audiences, primarily for their work in Eugene Theatre Company productions: Nyla McCarthy and Bill Ritchie for their work in *Forty-Nine*; John Freeman, Albert Strobel and Jane VanBoskirk for many area productions; and Philip Miller most re-

Under Milk Wood opens

From the woman who brought us Molly Bloom



'...the actors are always the last to get paid even though it's their creativity and spirit that usually makes the show,' says director Randi Douglas. '...the lyric scripts move us all to laughter and tears because we can recognize in the local characters the deepest roots of our common experience.'

The Time of Your Life Lives it up

By Peter Duryea
of the Emerald

It simply shouldn't be missed. The two empty seats next to me were inexcusable. Then again, front row seats are too much of a good thing. *The Time of Your Life* was just what it claims to be.

Many would stake that there are better things to do than to sit down and spectate, like ah maybe dancing or drinking. And that's what the players were doing, passing their time in Nick's Pacific Street Saloon, Restaurant and Entertainment Palace, down by the waterfront.

Nick is Greek. And he (Bill Burger), don't want no trouble. Just a place where folks can relax and idle their worries away or be entertained. So he hires a black who is so light that Nick has to feed him before he can do the dishes or play the piano. The music attracts a couple of whores who are looking for a generous host. They are not leeches, just people looking for a symbiotic relationship. A man with a pair of eyes and a nose put to use by the vice squad, ferrets them out.

Nick is pissed. The "live and let live" code has been violated. "Everytime you guys come down here looking for trouble you find it." Besides the vice, there's no trouble.

In fact, the bar is surprisingly trouble free; considering the diverse characters it houses, it's amazing that most everyone finds what they're looking for.

Even the dried out alkie who comes in every morning heading for the coin return on the phone at the end of the bar. It's empty. Nick schuffles him out immediately, except once when he has money for a couple of shots of booze. Later his silhouette is seen and he is heard outside hollering in praise "I've sinned." He found it. It may not have been what he was looking for but he found it. Ethan Newman (the drunk) shows how far an actor can go with very little script.

The Arab is another example of a magnificent job done with a minute part. He was unsurpassed in his ability to capture the audience's prejudices as we were laughing at him: the despicable old slobbery man who mutters "No foundation". Each time he opens his mouth it is the same phrase. Only its affect is altered through a very talented actor, who, in the end, has us very still, and uncomfortably enduring his utterances as they pierce our humanity because he is too real. "No foundation."

Then there is an aspiring comedian (Dan Moore) who is looking for a job simply on the basis of his "personality." Nick gives him a break. But he isn't funny. He "can't help it if people don't know what humor is." His hyper-

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