

Classic Miller tragedy lives again



Bill Ritchie as Uncle Charlie, Bill Geisslinger as Happy, and John Freeman as Willy Loman partake in a friendly poker game in ORT's production of "Death of a Salesman." Focusing

on the dilemma of disillusioned contemporary man, Arthur Miller's grim classic opens this evening and promises to be ORT's best.

By CHERYL RUDERT

Willy Loman is back. The disen-
chanted protagonist of Arthur
Miller's 20-year old classic
Death of a Salesman returns to
life at the Oregon Repertory
Theatre (ORT) tonight. And it's not
just a case of re-opening old
wounds.

Beginning a three-week run, the
show promises to be a moment-
ous one. Not only is the cast com-
posed of veteran ORT members,
who have been working together

for almost a year, but the produc-
tion has introduced a different re-
hearsal process than hitherto
used. Because Miller's play re-
quires a small, tight cast, explor-
ing the taut and fragile relation-
ships amongst themselves, direc-
tor Andrew Traister had the
players read through the script
and probe into possible motives
and interpretations. This "going
behind the lines" included impro-
visational exercises to sharpen
the cast's understanding of the
ways of the human psyche.

Death of a Salesman is a
somber statement on the aliena-
tion of modern man. An allegorical
and physical distance separates a
traveling shoe salesman and his
wife and two adult sons. Weighed
down by disillusionment and the
passage of an uneventful life,
Willy's hold on reality gives way.
When his sons return to the
homestead to help him, an intricate
psychological drama ensues, knit-
ting together lost dreams,
played-back childhood memories
and visions of a bleak future.

Filling the role of the misguided
salesman is John Freeman, a
strong and spirited ORT member

who has turned in memorable per-
formances in *Cat on a Hot Tin
Roof*, *Under Milk Wood*, *Bus Stop*
and, most recently, *A Thousand
Clowns*. Randi Douglas, ORT's
producing director and recent star
of *Molly Bloom*, plays his wife,
Linda. In the role of the hedonistic
son Happy, Bill Geisslinger re-
turns from his portrayal of a stuffy
social worker in *A Thousand
Clowns*. Newcomer John Flaherty
plays Biff, the unsuccessful and
disoriented son.

Three other characters round
out the cast. As a special guest
actor from the Lane Regional Arts
Council, Alan Gross plays Willy's

boss Howard. Michael Stark, in
his first acting role, is featured as
Ben, Loman's projected fantasy of
worldly success. Bill Ritchie, who
recently played Chuckles the
Chipmunk in *A Thousand Clowns*,
plays Uncle Charlie.

Directed by Andrew Traister,
who recently starred as Murray
Burns in *A Thousand Clowns* and
also directed *Slow Dance on the
Killing Ground* and *Bus Stop*, the
play faces the impasse of bringing
a quite familiar play to an audi-
ence that has been practically
reared on it. This obstacle, how-
ever, could prove to be an advan-
tage; if the cast can succeed in
going beyond previous expecta-
tions and offer a unique interpreta-
tion, the production could prove to
be ORT's finest to date.

Death of a Salesman will be
performed Oct. 13 through Nov. 6
at 8:30 p.m. Matinees will be of-
fered at 2 p.m. on Oct. 26, 29 and
Nov. 2 and 5. ORT is located on
the second floor of the Atrium. For
further information and reserva-
tions call 485-1946.

Nov. 2 and 5. Tickets for Thursday
and Sunday performances are \$3.
For Friday and Saturday tickets
are \$4. ORT is located on the sec-
ond floor of the Atrium. For infor-
mation and reservations call
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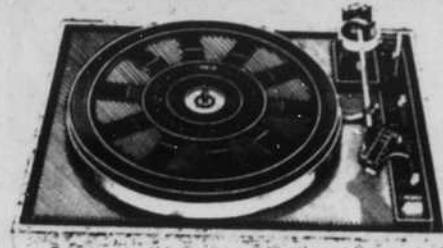
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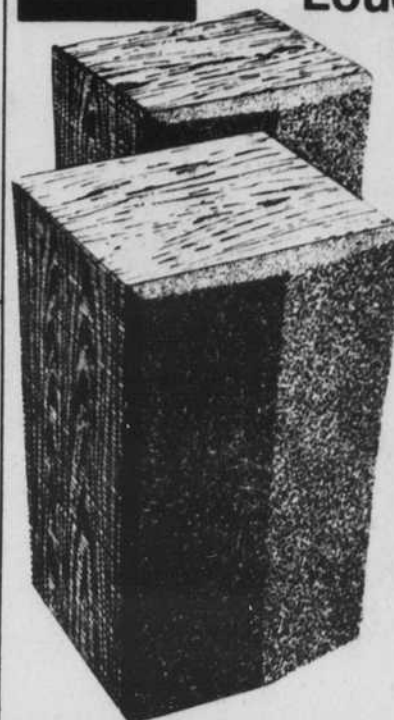
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