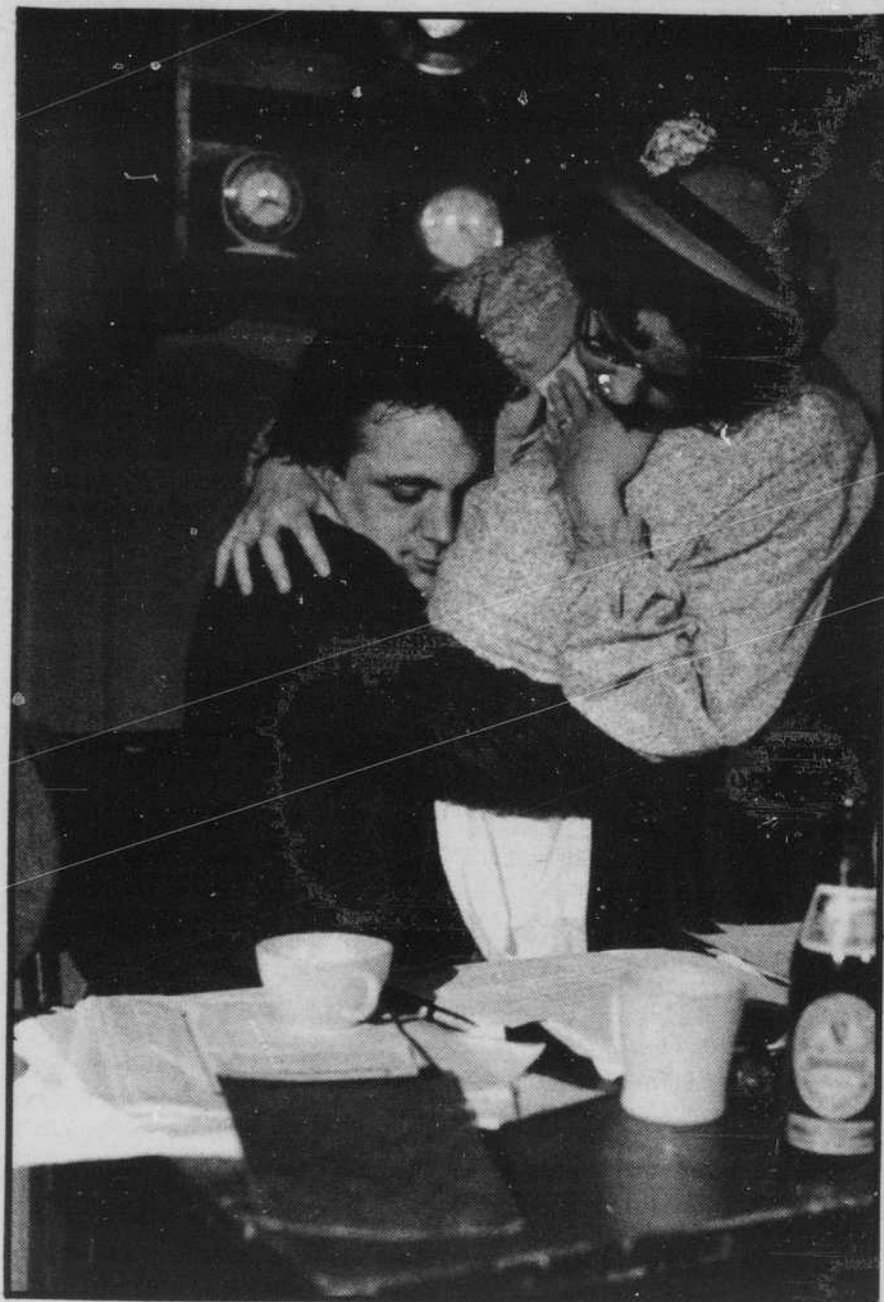


Improvisation Oregon Repertory Theatre combines character changes, music sidebars

By CHERYL RUDERT



Above, Albert Strobel, as Dylan Thomas, gets a reassuring hug from Jane VanBoskirk. To the right, Jane Stevens-Jones and Jane VanBoskirk, as Mrs. Dai Bread 1 and 2, share thoughts about their mutual husband, the local baker.

In November, 1976 Dylan Thomas came to life on a small Eugene stage. With him 40-odd inhabitants of a Welsh fishing village succinctly re-enacted one full day of their lives and fantasies. It was a memorable theater event.

Under Milk Wood, originally intended as a radio script, was performed by seven actors in connection with Lane Regional Arts Council. Directed by Randi Douglas, the play gained several new dimensions when the character Dylan Thomas was added to the script instead of the abstract narrator. Gleaned from a historical perspective, the play's framework became a play in the act of being written, with the actors stepping out of their characters to relate directly to the writer.

According to stories about *Under Milk Wood's* first presentation in America, Thomas was still writing lines for the actors on scraps of paper during the performance. Douglas elaborates on this by bringing in the poet's drinking problems (the play was first performed shortly before his death in 1953) and the relationship between writer and actors as well as artist and the characters of his creation.

Starting tonight and running through Feb. 5, Oregon Repertory Theatre (ORT) is presenting an interpretation that uses some of the same improvisational work done in this production. Also directed by Randi Douglas, the ORT production will feature, with a few changes, the same small cast (the seven actors have to play several very different characters, often doing a complete change of character in a matter of seconds) as well as a program of Welsh folk music by local musicians Linda Danielson and Bob Choderker.

Appearing again in the role of Dylan Thomas will be guest performer Albert M. Strobel. Known for his work in Chekov's *Swan Song*, Strobel received his training at the University and recently gave a remarkable reading of Dylan Thomas' "A Child's Christmas in Wales" in a Christmas concert given by Fat Chance at the Lane Community Civic Center.

Also from the former cast are John Freeman, a veteran Eugene actor who recently played Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*; Jane VanBoskirk, also from the cast of *Salesman*, as well as *Bus Stop* and *Slow Dance on the Killing Ground*; Bill Ritchie, who warmed a lot of hearts as Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*; Jane Steven-Jones, who was featured as the Ghost of Christmas Future in *Christmas Carol* and who acts as choreographer for *Under Milk Wood*; and Philip Miller, also recently from the cast of *Christmas Carol*. Randi Douglas will fill in the roles played last year by Nyla McCarthy.

Evening performances at 8 p.m. will be prefaced at 7:40 p.m. each evening with a program of Welsh folk music. The show runs weekends through Feb. 5. Matinees at 2 p.m. will be held Jan. 21, 25, 28 and Feb. 1 and 4. The ticket price for Thursday and Sunday night shows is \$3; Friday and Saturday nights, \$14. Matinees are \$2.50. For information and reservations, call the ORT box office at 485-1946.



Photos by Erich Boekelheide

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Shakespeare fest opens spring season

A weekend of professional theater can be savored in the southern Oregon mountains, as the Oregon Shakespearean Festival's STAGE II begins its spring season in Ashland.

Opening Feb. 3 and continuing through April 1, the four-play repertory includes Moliere's *Tartuffe*, guest directed by Sabin Epstein; Noel Coward's *Private*

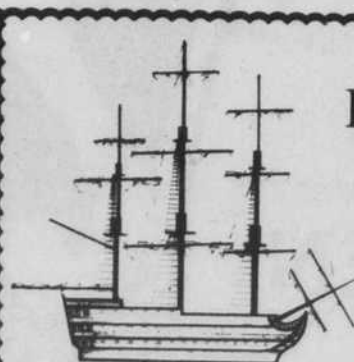
Lives, directed by Dennis Bigelow; Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children*, directed by producing director Jerry Turner; and Paul Zindel's *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*, to be staged by guest director William Glover at the Black Swan.

Tartuffe, *Private Lives* and *Mother Courage* will play in rota-

tion in the Angus Bowmer Theatre throughout the season. *Marigolds* opens at the Black Swan Sunday, Feb. 5 and will be presented on Sunday evenings.

The summer season, which opens in June, will include *Mother Courage* and *Tartuffe*, as well as Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *The Tempest* and *Richard the Third*.

Tickets are on sale now at the Ashland Box Office and branch ticket agencies. In Eugene tickets can be purchased at Carl Greve Jewelry, 51 W. Broadway, and the EMU.



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