

Light tale offers down-to-earth message

Reynard the Fox has the appearance of a children's fairy tale, but it is quite down-to-earth in its message. It combines the unreal charm of personified animals with a sly vision of human nature, an approach very much in accord with the traditional personality of its title character.



By **KEN GOLDMAN**
Reynard the Fox

As director Andrew Traister points out in his program notes, the fox is a durable literary symbol whose wily worldliness has been used by such disparate authors as Aesop and Jonson. When there is a fox loose in the imagination, no one's complacency is safe. While full of lightness and bounce that will surely keep children intrigued, *Reynard the Fox* also has a mature understanding of human foibles, courtesy of its main protagonist, that will make it an equally satisfying evening for adults.

The witty key to Reynard's trickery of members of the animal kingdom is that his victims have

contributed to their own entrapment. As surely as Reynard is devious, the other animals are shown to be foolish and greedy in their own less accomplished ways. The playful vision of animals bounding around the stage becomes a jovial way to show human types caught in their own

very, very clever. When the play ends, after a series of events that have hopefully opened a few eyes in the animal kingdom, Reynard confidently confides to the audience: "We all have a little bad in us, don't we?"

But there is little to be found that is bad in this Oregon Repertory production. Director Traister, as proven in his previous work on productions like *Death of a Salesman* and *Under Milkwood*, has a fine talent for getting the most out of the intimate space of the company's theater in the Atrium. His set design is clean and open and he has filled it with a fast interchange of pratfalls, mugging and rapid dialogue that is continually diverting. What the set may lack in detailed decor is made up by Traister's broad dispersal of the player's movements. In all of the ORT productions I've seen there has been an acute awareness of the advantages of brisk pacing, and this show is no exception.

The acting was unsubtly delightful with expansive gestures and funny faces that were consistently amusing. This seemed to be a "fun" show for the performers;

it's a no-holds-barred call for them to ham it up to the hilt. Their enthusiasm was infectious. The cast included Carolanne Young, Michael Cadigan, Philip Miller, Bill Geisslinger, Kirk Boyd, Jane VanBoskirk and Jane Stevens-Jones as Reynard. Young's crow and VanBoskirk's marmot deserve special mention, I think, for their skill in having so well embodied the essence of their animal characters. In general, the whole cast was a most expressive menagerie.

The most outstanding production value was the costumes. Each character's attire was designed by a separate individual and all benefited from the personal touch. The creative use of make-up did much to capture for each animal its particular countenance. While the costuming represented the clearest "fairy tale" aspect of the production with its

bright, indulgent exuberance, there was still a consciousness of the play's underlining allusions to the real world. For example, the costuming of the crow, wolf and bear reinforced the impression that they symbolized specific nationalities (French, German and Russian, respectively) and contributed to the idea that the play was having a general sort of fun with European stereotypes.

Though it would probably be counter-productive to enjoyment to try and analyze the play deeply, it would also be a mistake to shrug it off as mere puffery. The intentions of *Reynard the Fox* are pleasant and accessible, and very worthwhile. It is family entertainment in the best sense; charming and sane, the play is a fine entertainment dignifying for both young and old. In a true spirit of magnanimity, the show offers equally to everyone.

Hear and Now is edited by Eric Maloney and Jerril Nilson. All contributions are welcome, but should be submitted one week prior to the event or on the Monday prior to expected publication. All contributions to Out and About must be submitted the Friday before publication.

Sea Level, Dave Van Ronk at The Place

With three new members and a brand new release on record store walls, Allman Brothers Band-offshoot Sea Level comes to The Place tonight for two shows at 8 and 11 p.m.

The original Sea Level trio which produced the group's first album, *Sea Level*, includes Chuck Leavell, Jai Johanny Johanson and Lamar Williams. Guitarist Jimmy Nalls joined up soon thereafter. And for their current release, *Cats on the Coast*, Randall Bramblett (keyboards, horns, vocals) and Davis Causey (guitar) who both have recorded with Gregg Allman, and drummer George Weaver joined Leavell and Co.

Although their current album's fame has brought them into the larger concert circuit, Sea Level still prefers the club atmosphere, where they produce a unique brand of blues-jazz-soul.

Tickets for tonight's performances are \$7 at Everybody's Records, the Sun Shop and The Place.

He's been producing for over 20 years, yet this performer's name is anything but a household word. Dave Van Ronk, currently recording on the Philo Records label, has been a minstrel of fame in folk music around New York City and the New England states. He has contended with the misnomer of "white bluesman" — but Van Ronk is a bluesman and much more.

Van Ronk will growl, whisper, shout, squeak and blues it for one show Friday night at 9:30 at The Place.

Van Ronk, who almost single-handedly brought rural blues to the folk movement, is not a folk artist in the refined sense. He combines narrative poem, blues guitar, ragtime instrumental, gut feeling blues ballads and jazz in a highly individualistic style. For tickets to this event check Everybody's Records, the Sun Shop and The Place and bring along \$3.50 for advance tickets, \$4.50 the day of the show.

Oregon Daily Emerald



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