

Theater

The Public Eye
By Peter Shaffer
Directed by William Reid, Jr.
and
Mrs. Dally Has A Lover
By William Hanley
Directed by Bonnie Vorenberg
University Theatre
Dec. 7-9

Two one-act plays — a comedy and a tragedy — are currently being performed by the University Theatre on a single billing.

The Public Eye, by Peter Shaffer, is a comedy about an eccentric private eye hired by a stuffy accountant, who believes his young wife is having an affair. Ironically, the wife develops a platonic infatuation for the detective.

Darrell Gray is brilliant as Cristoforou, the bumbling, Columbo-type detective, complete with rumpled trenchcoat. His outlandish attire and odd eating habits — he munches on yogurt and macaroons which he produces from his pockets at inappropriate times — make him a comical yet lovable character.

Patrick Avery as Sidley, the



Photos by Doug Williams

rigid intellectual inhibited by snobbish notions of propriety, gives a rather stilted performance. His lines seem forced and unnatural.

Elise Fulsang as Mrs. Sidley is not entirely convincing either. Mrs. Sidley is a working-class woman, a "Liza Doolittle," married to a "Professor Higgins" who is trying to transform her into a fair lady. Fulsang fails to project an "other-side-of-the-tracks" image.

Minor flaws aside, the play is entertaining. The humor is clever, sometimes subtle, and often riotous. For example, we learn that Mrs. Sidley, on one of her outings, went to a film called *I Was a Teenage Necrophile*; later she went into a coffeeshop where she ordered a "Leaning Tower of Piza," described by Cristoforou as a "phallic confection." I was on the floor.

Unfortunately the playwright indulges in some heavyhanded moralizing toward the end. Some lines are agonizingly mawkish, to wit, "We are born living, but how willing we are to play possum and fake dead."

Author Peter Shaffer does not begin to approach the heights of genius he reached in his later work, *Equus*. But *The Public Eye* is good for a few laughs.

For the second play, *Mrs. Dally Has a Lover*, by William Hanley, the set is miraculously transformed from an opulent office into a shabby tenement kitchen.

We meet the characters, Mrs. Dally and Frankie, as they emerge from the bedroom bantering affectionately. We quickly learn they are lovers — not too startling, except that she is 38 and he is a teenager.

Susan Zadoff gives a sensitive

and highly skilled performance as the complex Mrs. Dally, a middle-aged woman disappointed by marriage, but still harboring fantasies of romance and love. Zadoff is able, with great finesse,



to show us a woman who bolsters her ego by walking past a construction site deliberately hoping to elicit whistles and wolf calls from the workers, but who also spends hours in a museum staring at a certain china cup. A woman who says "ain't," but reads poetry by John Donne.

Frankie is played by John Denning, who exhibits all the impatience, embarrassment, and awkward tenderness of adolescence in a very credible performance.

The Oedipal undertones of the story become more striking as we learn that Mrs. Dally had a son who died in infancy. Frankie is the son she lost; she sees in him all of the potential she once saw in her child.

Fifteen years of marriage to "the brute," as she likes to call her husband, have not killed her desire for love, nor diminished her passion for beauty. Mrs. Dally and Frankie bring all their fears and fantasies into a relationship of rare honesty. They come to each other begging to be reassured. She performs an old routine for him, a song and dance she did in nightclubs before she threw her life away on "the brute." The scene is full of pathos — the bitter-sweet memories of a disillusioned housewife dancing in a black slip and red highheels for a boyish lover.

The play is powerful and poignant. The cast and director, Bonnie Vorenberg, have done full justice to the work.

The plays run Friday-Sunday, 8 p.m., in Villard Hall's Pocket Theatre. By Lee Sherman-Stadius

Christopher Columbus
By Michel de Ghelderode
Directed by James Aday
NewMime Circus
Open Gallery
Dec. 8-9, 15-16

As a break from the unchanging run of movies that seems to have settled permanently on Eugene, almost anyone should be able to enjoy NewMime Circus' *Christopher Columbus*.

In the spirit of the troupe, the performance is a blend of theater, dance and impressionism. It's performed with wit and imagination.

The play was written by Belgian playwright Michel de Ghelderode in 1927, and you guessed it, he was both reclusive and obscure.

Like most foreign playwrights, Ghelderode has stuck an allegory in his play, one that can be passed over without sacrifice. It's just as rewarding to watch the antics and listen for the word plays.

Kings, reporters, mermaids and whiskey-addled South American natives constantly assault Chris, who would really rather just keep sailing, maybe sneaking a drink or two for himself along the way.

But the NewMime Circus is always full of surprises. The biggest one starts when the play begins.

For the first half-hour before the play feline movements performed in silence keep the accumulating audience tip toeing in, conscious of every violation in sound. The actors elongate and contract to the dulcet mood of stringed instruments and soft voices straining to accompany them in like.

Suddenly, casually, the play begins. The well-toned felines stand upright and begin to speak. Mimes and cats usually don't talk and it takes a while to realize the sounds are okay.

Perhaps the most enjoyable aspect of the production is the versatility of the cast in using makeshift props to perform dual or quadra-purposes. A fish net at the dock by Columbus' boat later becomes a jail to house the adventure. A harp provides dream-like, wafting accompaniment while at the same time moving in rhythm to become the bow of the ship.

Columbus performances will continue Friday and Saturday, and again Dec. 15 and 16 at the Open Gallery, 445 High St. Curtain time is 8:30 p.m.

The show is directed by James Aday and includes Bill Lynch as Columbus and Nancy Cave, Richard Cave, Don Aday, Gary Pesciallo and Sue Davis in a variety of roles.

Tickets for the play, which is partly sponsored by the City of Eugene Room Tax Fund are

available at the Backstage Dancewear, the Open Gallery and the NewMime Circus headquarters, 347½ High St., for \$2.50 each. They will also be sold at the door. By Tom Wolfe



A Christmas Carol
By Charles Dickens
Adapted by Cheney Ryan and Randi Douglas
Directed by David Lunney
Oregon Repertory Theatre
through Dec. 31

Mrs. Fuzziwig and the ghost of Christmas present combine to lead Oregon Repertory Theatre to a hit with *A Christmas Carol*. Both parts are played by Bonnie Cohen, who joined ORT last year.

The program debuted before a sell-out crowd Wednesday night at the Atrium Building at Willamette Street and 11th Avenue.

After a slow first act Cohen reaches for her magic dust, lifts her dress of rags and turns Ebenezer "Scroogie" and the audience from the doldrums of the approaching holiday.

It's a break anyone who's vis-

ited Valley River recently should enjoy.

Part of the delight of ORT's performance comes from the imaginative adaptation of the play by Cheney Ryan and Randi Douglas, music by Linda Danielson.

They moved Bob Cratchit and Co. to a mining town in Appalachia during the Great Depression. And you thought things were tough in Chattanooga. In Tiny Tim's town a day's work in the choking mines pays a buck, 50 cents for factory work.

Well-directed lighting and smooth stage movements help permit the production to move naturally, smoothly through several difficult stage effects.

Two hobos outside town narrate Dickens' classic tale, attempting to dissuade a thieving young rascal to mend his ways. Already wizened in his corruption, the ruffian is skeptical that the holiday heretic will never turn from his ways. Wrongo. But everyone knows that.

What they don't know is that union songs, Appalachian accents, and exaggerated costuming can replace Dickens' more sober style with success and occasional finesse.

But ORT crowds are generous.

The theatre sold out for opening night and audiences can expect the help of an enthusiastic crowd to move along with the play.

It's easier to enjoy something when the audience is at ease enough to laugh out loud or clap after a particularly clever bit of acting.

The play continues tonight and weekends through the holiday at \$2.50 a shot. Reservations are advised.

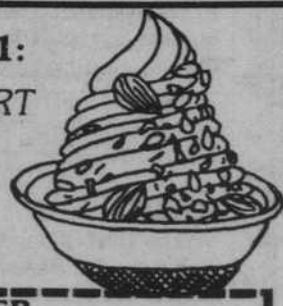
By Tom Wolfe

Light Meal Suggestion #1:

LOW FAT FROZEN YOGURT

High in Protein and filling as a light meal.
Lower in calories, cholesterol and fat than ice cream as a snack.

14 FLAVORS DAILY

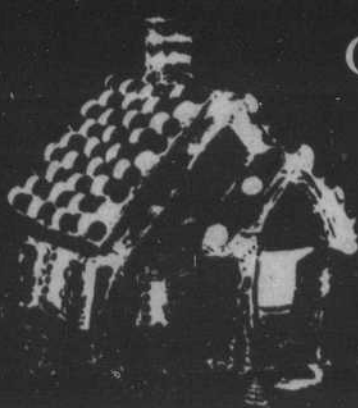


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December 8th 10-1 pm

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