

'Dizzy' starts well, but . . .

"Benjamin Dizzy"
Pocket Playhouse
April 24

The "world premiere" production of Terence Jones' "Benjamin Dizzy" came on strong, but didn't quite finish the race in front. The elements of directing, acting, costuming, and scenery were impeccable in production, but the foundation for these elements, the script, left something to be desired.

"Dizzy's" story line is quite simple: it recounts the life of Benjamin Disraeli, the nineteenth century British Prime Minister. Yet his life was anything but simple. His father wanted him to be a quiet lawyer, while he wanted power and fame. During his life he was a novelist, a poet, and one of the most influential men of his time. Controversy was Disraeli's lifestyle, and a calm existence was non-existent for him.

The first act of "Dizzy" is compelling. Disraeli wants power in the Parliament, and attends all of the required social functions and dinners, but is checked at each point by his enemies. Dizzy's personal life is also revealed. An "adored being," his mistress, and the true companion of his life, his wife Mary Ann, are introduced. Disraeli's outlet for his frustrations was his writing, and Jones develops this side, showing Dizzy's wit and intelligence through the first act.

Jones' creation fails in the second act: Disraeli attains the pinnacle of power, he becomes Prime Minister and then Jones seems to lose interest in him. The remainder of Disraeli's greatness, his life and his final achievements are recounted in the span of a half of an hour. Disraeli's triumphal entry into the office of Prime Minister, his diplomatic expertise in creating Queen Victoria as Empress of India, and the success he enjoyed in the handling of Bismark are dealt with, but with so little detail or humor that the audience is left wondering if they might have missed some of the show during the intermission. Neither the most ingenious of directors nor the most gifted of actors could compensate for this flaw in the script.



Stephen Yarian, as director and actor, does create a wonderful show from the script provided. It is quite evident that Yarian is capable of directing and performing in the same production. In both capacities, he makes good use of four peripheral actors/characters (Molli Fleming, D. Patrick Lawler, Sarah Lucht, and Mark Schwahn) in broadening the scope of the play and the depth of Disraeli's character. Yarian also makes good use of the props and costumes provided to produce his character revelations.

The University Theatre technical staff lives up to their normal high standards, and the elements of lighting, scenery, and costumes add greatly to the enjoyability of the production. The costume designs were particularly good. Kristina Shaughnessy created costumes accurate for the period, yet individualized to explore the changes in Disraeli's social positions.

Aside from the definite structural problems within the script, the University's production of "Benjamin Dizzy" is excellent. When you do see it, brush up on your late nineteenth century English history or you could get lost in Dizzy's monologues.

by c. allen rylander

Rare books at Museum of Art

An exhibition of library memorabilia ranging from Babylonian clay tablets to a Renaissance encyclopedia is currently being featured at the University Museum of Art.

The exhibition, lasting through May 2, highlights the joint celebration of the centennial of the University Library and the 75th anniversary of the Eugene Public Library. The show is funded in part by the Oregon Committee for the Humanities.

The exhibit displays objects from the library's rare book collection, including books, manuscripts, illustrations, maps and photographs in more than a dozen categories.

The "European Manuscripts" display includes one of the library's oldest books, an 11th century manuscript hand-written on calf skin.

Babylonian clay tablets in the exhibit of "Middle Eastern Manuscripts" are the library's oldest items dating as early as 1900 B.C.

The display of "Early Printed Books" features the most visually appealing piece, a Renaissance encyclopedia containing illustrations and fine printing.

The "Oregon Imprint" display of Oregon publications printed before 1871 features some of the library's rarest items. These publications provide a vivid insight into frontier life.

Another notable item from Oregon, the transcript of Ken Kesey's novel "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," is included in the "Modern Literary Typescripts" section. Also included in this section is an original Agatha Christie mystery novel typescript.

The exhibit of "Printed Books" features an unusual leather book with chains and iron fittings, which reflects the medieval practice of chaining books to shelves or desks because of the books' great value.

A collection of "Books of Hours," containing prayers and scripture, includes a richly illustrated book with a picture of the book's owner kneeling before the Virgin and Child.

"Orientalia," a collection of items from East Asia, features a Burmese text written on palm leaves and a Chinese scroll written on cloth.

The display of "Illustrations" features the original drawings by Hardie Gramatky for the children's book, "Little Toot."

The "Photography" category displays an important collection of photographs depicting people from Pacific Northwest Indian tribes.

Among the other library items are displays of sheet music, calligraphy, fine printing, geography and travel books, diaries and maps, and herbals or botanical books.

A catalogue on the library exhibit containing approximately 32 pages of background information and illustrations is available. Cost is \$3, or \$3.50 by mail.

The museum is open from noon to 5 p.m. daily except Mondays and holidays. Free guided tours



are given Sundays beginning at 2 p.m. in the main foyer. For additional information, call 686-3027.

by kitty mithen

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