

robert webb

performances save crowded comedy

A young, high-spirited commedia dell'arte ensemble show has come to town and the action is fast and furious — perhaps too much so.

"A Company of Wayward Saints," now playing at the Very Little Theatre, starts off suddenly. Scapino, energetically acted by Matt Bonham, realizes that there is an audience in the house and that the players have not yet assembled. He goes through a tremendous range of sight gags, dance steps, pratfalls and silly faces to entertain us while bemoaning the fact that his companions are not there yet and that the show isn't ready to go on. When the company does come together, this sort of frenzied physical acrobatic activity increases tenfold.

The show's plot is very simple: the ten players make up a commedia dell'arte troupe, the Company of Wayward Saints, who, as their delapidated banner proclaims, travel from town to town doing their comedy routines. Each member plays his or her own traditional role (rascal, tart, warrior, old man, lover, etc.) complete with costume and often with a mask.

But the company is in a quandry. Their shows aren't doing well, they are tired of the road and of each other and all they want to do is go home.

It so happens that in the audience tonight is a Duke who will give them the money to go home if they will perform what he wants to see. The actors readily agree, even after they learn that the Duke wants them to do The History of Man.

In their slam-bang, rambunctious style the company tears into Adam and Eve, Odysseus' return from the siege of Troy and the assassination of Caesar. These sequences have some very fine and funny bits in them, especially Matt Bonham's slithery physical quality as the Snake, and Teri Thomas, who, as Calpurnia, tells Caesar about dreaming of him being stabbed by men with "adorable little short swords."

The problem with Act I is that there is just too much going on. There are bits played all over the stage and we miss half of them while watching others. Sometimes actions are actually blocked from our view because other actors get in the way. Also, this energetic approach often gets in the way of the actors' delivery and their ability to convey the meaning behind the spoken lines.

In many ways, it's a joy to see these actors and director Dennis Dolan coming up with so many delightful sight gags and action. It's energizing for the audience as well, up to a point.

But on the other hand the lack of focus due to poor orchestration by the director makes the whole thing appear confusing after a while. Confusion for its own sake is not a strong enough premise to hold our interest for a full act.

The play demands some extent of a splintering effect in order to underline one of its major themes, that none of us will get anywhere unless we stop thinking only of ourselves and cooperate with each other. But it's like the old adage that if an actor truly portrayed

boredom, the audience would probably be bored watching it. The trick is to make an interesting portrayal of boredom. The problem with this production is that it failed to show that its confusion had a purpose.

Act II, however, settled down considerably as playwright George Herman allowed his characters to see their errors and focus on the truths underlying their roles.

The characters decide that the History of Man could also be construed as the archetypal history of "a" man. We are then led into more simple, direct stories of birth, adolescence, marriage and death.

Two of the scenes were particularly effective: the episode involving Thomas and Bonham as Huckleberry Finn-type characters exploring the blossoming of early love and the "first kiss," and the final sequence with Don Scorby as a conquering warrior and John Duncan as a priest condemned to die. This latter tale effectively punctuates its tragedy with a sense of humor, an odd but useful approach.

Act II is as rewarding as Act I is confusing. A schizophrenic production, perhaps, but one worth seeing for the truths revealed and several fine performances, most notably those mentioned above and Roberto Morganti as the hunchbacked set changer.

"A Company of Wayward Saints" continues its run at the Very Little Theatre, 2350 Hilyard, Nov. 26, 27 and Dec. 1-4. Curtain time is 8:15 p.m. Tickets are \$4 each. Call 344-7751 for reservations.

Strategic Management Institute may boost Northwest business economy

By Land du Pont
Of the Emerald

Increasing organizational skills of Northwest businesses through research projects would be the goal of the Northwest Strategic Management Institute — if it gets funding.

Creation of the institute hinges on a request for a three-year annual commitment of \$255,000 from the Fred Meyer Charitable Trust.

"The institute would be a framework for applied research," says Jim Reinmuth, dean of the business college.

Reinmuth is positive about the prospect of getting funding, but sees one potential hitch.

"I'd give anything to see it accepted," he says. "But we have one problem... private

trusts often don't want to give money to public institutions."

Reinmuth notes that while the institute would use private money from the companies requesting research, the initial funding is necessary to coordinate the efforts of the institute.

Several businesses, including Pacific Northwest Bell and the Weyerhaeuser Foundation, have indicated interest in projects if the Fred Meyer Trust comes through.

The institute would consist of two directors responsible to Reinmuth and an advisory board of local business leaders. Project teams would conduct research in areas identified by businesses and the institute.

While the institute would employ professors and students who are already at

the business school on the project teams, it would draw its funding from private sources.

The focus of the institute's activities would be the private sector, but it could become an important part of the school.

"I see a great deal of faculty research directed at the institute," Reinmuth says. Business school faculty would be involved in the summer and could get time off during the school year to work on projects, he adds.

Reinmuth believes the institute could become as important to the state and the University as the OSU agricultural program.

"For the past hundred years, the agricultural extension at OSU has acted as a magnet for farmers," he says. "We hope to do the same for businesses."

Businesses and LTD drop fare to 10 cents, a shoppers windfall

Ten cents doesn't pay for much these days — certainly not a rider's share of running an Lane Transit District motor-coach through Eugene.

But 10 cents is all a rider will have to pay to board LTD buses all day Saturday for any destination within the Eugene-Springfield area.

The Downtown Association of businesses will pay the difference in the fare. This windfall for LTD riders is in accord with promotion arrangements between The Downtown Association and LTD. Last year a

special promotion was paid for solely by LTD. Ridership went up 30 percent and revenues fell by only \$300 says Ed Bergerson, LTD marketing director.

"It was an encouraging promotion and the Downtown Association had their biggest sale day ever," Bergerson says.

Because the last year's successful promotion the Downtown Association readily agreed to foot the riders bill for another \$300. It's all to the benefit of LTD riders.

Happy traveling.

School schedules piano classes

Piano classes for children, teenagers and adults in the Eugene-Springfield area will be taught this winter at the University music school.

Students will be taught the elements of music and how to use them in improvising, harmonizing, playing by ear and transposing. In addition, they will learn to read classical, folk and popular music.

Individual lessons are combined with small-group studies at all levels of performance. A

special class is offered at reduced rates for senior citizens.

Music professor Doris Allen serves as the division's director, assisted by a staff of experienced piano teachers.

Offered by the school's Preparatory Division, the on-campus courses will begin Jan. 5 and continue for 10 weeks through March 15. A fee is charged for the classes. Registration began on Dec. 1.

New look, same great taste!

LOOK HOW WE'VE GROWN, EUGENE!



We've grown a lot since our first restaurant opened in 1960 at 13th and High. Since then, we've made a few changes, but one thing that will never change at Taco Time® is the great taste of our food. We invite you to drop in at our newly remodeled restaurant near campus at 1401 Villard Street. You'll enjoy that great taste, and, you'll see how we've grown!



Taco Time has a new look inside and out. There's one thing we'll never change, though, and that's the great taste of our food, as important to us now as it was 22 years ago.

Our first Taco Time® restaurant offered Tacos, Bean Tostados and Taco Burgers. Who would have thought this could be the beginning of an international success story?

Just a year later, we're already growing! Folks living in Springfield, Oregon and Tacoma, Washington enjoy new Crisp Meat and Bean Burritos in two new Taco Time restaurants.

We introduce customers to 26 new restaurants and two popular menu items — Taco Time® Enchiladas and Cinnamon Custos.

The growing years — 35 new Taco Time® restaurants spring up across the Western United States.

Our new Drive-Thru window is a first in the Northwest, and so is our new Taco Salad!

Some like it crisp — some like it soft. New Soft Tacos and Burritos are a hit.

Would you believe Taco Time goes Hawaiian?!

It's a natural! We've got the first Natural Super Taco made on a whole wheat tortilla and we've grown to 225 restaurants in 13 states.

Taco Time pops up "down under" with two stores in Australia.

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