

'Sleepwalkers' called a success despite inconsistencies in acting

By Marty Schwarzbauer

Of the Emerald

After the Nov. 15 performance of Andries Oliphant's "The Sleepwalkers," a man approached Oliphant in the hallway outside Villard Hall's Pocket Theatre and said he had not enjoyed the play, but that he had been moved by it. Oliphant smiled, shook the man's hand and thanked him.

That exchange describes both Oliphant's intent in writing "The Sleepwalkers" and the overall effect of this Theatre 4:30 production, the play's premiere run.

Although the play deals with the problems of an urban black South African family facing the long-term imprisonment of their son, Oliphant and director Andrew DeRycke are successful in preventing the play from becoming too heavy-handed.

The combination of intimacy and repression one would expect from theater of this nature was effectively conveyed in the Pocket, with the simple staging, the proximity between actors and audience, and with the stone-faced prison guards at the end of each aisle.

The cast, consisting of graduate teaching fellow Sharon Elise (previously listed as Claeysens) and local musician Willie Dee as Elaine and Luke, the parents, and Daniel Corona, a University student from North Africa, as Norman, their son, performed very well within the confines of a short rehearsal run and numerous scheduling conflicts.

Dee does an especially wonderful job carrying the vocal character and body language of a

tired old man. His range from apathy and indifference to explosive temper tantrums is quite convincing, as is his use of the newspaper both as a prop and a symbol. His portrayal of Luke's relationship with his son, though, wasn't as clear as it could have been.

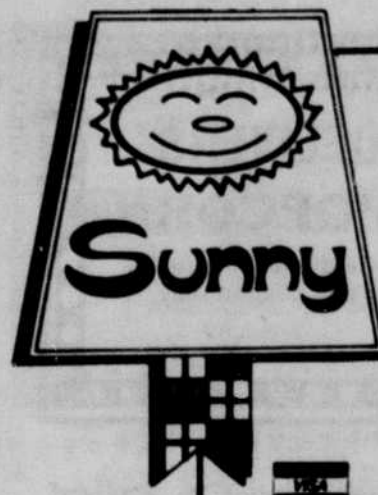
Elise communicates a nice sense of motherly doting and conveyed a feeling of someone who is used to talking to her husband and son, although she is aware they probably aren't listening.

Her off-focus acting is also good, and her efforts to bring Luke and Norman out of reminiscing a depressing past are believable. However, some of her mood transitions, especially when building into anger, are too abrupt.

Corona's portrayal of Norman also works well. His sense of fatigue and disorientation in the prison flashback scene and his physical acting later in the homecoming dream sequence are noticeably effective, but there are times when his accent and enunciation are hard to understand.

"The Sleepwalkers" deals sensitively with a highly explosive social situation, and is therefore an important topical example of contemporary revolutionary theater.

Because of the large numbers unable to see "The Sleepwalkers" in the small space at the Pocket Theatre in November, the Anti-Apartheid Coalition of Eugene is sponsoring another production of the play with the original cast. The show will run at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 20 at the Eugene Council for Human Rights in Latin America, 1236 Kincaid St., behind the University Bookstore.



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Women

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Nicolle Aislinn, another participant. "There's a feeling of sisterhood here, and I know I don't have to go through this alone."

Other people emphasized the new awareness they had gained about men and the way they sabotage any chance to establish a healthy relationship with one.

"We stay away from nice, stable men," Reddon said. "I had one that was interested in me, and it scared the hell out of me. So I chased him away."

Robin Johnson, another group member, believes that some people resisted going for help because they associated support groups and therapy with radical feminism, she said.

"We're not just sitting around here being man-haters," she said. "Our goal is to become whole women so we can be healthy partners and involved in healthy relationships. Men are victims, too."

The other workshop participants agreed.

"I'd like to see a workshop like this for men," Aislinn said. "Instead of women who love too much, it should be called people who love too much."

Co-participation in therapy would give men and women a chance to process and grow together, participants said. This could lead to later participation in a co-educational support group and hopefully increase the chances of parents not passing their destructive cycles on to their children, they said.

"Co-alcoholism is a disease that can be transmitted,"

The road to recovery from "Women Who Love Too Much":

1. Go for help.
2. Make your own recovery the first priority in your life.
3. Find a support group of peers who understand.
4. Develop your spiritual side through daily practice.
5. Stop managing and controlling others.
6. Learn not to get hooked into the games you've played before.
7. Courageously face your own problems and shortcomings.
8. Cultivate whatever needs to be developed in yourself.
9. Become selfish; realize that you can't help anyone else until you help yourself.
10. Share with others what you have experienced and learned.

Johnson said. "It's important that we heal ourselves so we can break the cycle and provide healthy, functional life-coping skills for our children."

"Young people have an advantage today," Reddon added. "They're more conscious of the way dependency can interfere with their lives and feel more comfortable asking for what they want in a relationship. I think there's real hope for the future that we can lick this thing."

Hess and Villagian said they plan to hold another workshop next month. It will be limited to 15 participants.

On-going classes are also available on Monday and Thursday of every week from 7:30 to 9 p.m. at the Unity Church in Eugene. The sessions are free to anyone who wishes

to come. Interested people may call Hess at 683-2527 or Villagian at 484-0024 for more information.



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