

# Down-to-earth 'Diviners' offers inspiration, enrichment

By Ming Rodrigues  
Emerald Contributor

Some things that happen in our lives are inevitable. It's only after we accept change and learn from it that we experience renewal and rejuvenation and can then move on to a better life.

*The Diviners* is a drama that plays on this note of hope. Written by Indiana playwright Jim Leonard Jr., it is a sensitive, touching story showing how the often painful cycles of life can also be enriching.

The plot revolves around the small southern Indiana farming community of Zion set in the 1930s. A young boy is devastated when his mother dies while trying to save him from drowning.

Enter an out-of-work, wandering preacher who comes to know the boy and ends up, inadvertently, teaching him to accept her death and to resolve his pain. As events progress, the community gets drawn into the relationship between the boy and the preacher.

"This is a story about real people with real concerns," said director David Mason, a

University graduate student in theater arts. "It is set in a period when people were down-to-earth and life was simple, straightforward and arranged around God, family and the land.

"But we discover that everyone in Zion is seeking or 'divining' something that is missing from their own lives. The divinations come to a head with the arrival of the fallen preacher and it is the unwanted expectations and good intentions that the townsfolk have for him that propel the play forward."

Forward to a tragic conclusion, but as Mason insists, a conclusion that is also hopeful within its tragedy, because it is not in finding or getting what we're looking for that would make the difference in our lives, but the knowledge of what we're seeking and the process of discovering or divining it that is the real reward.

"We get a sense at the end of this play that the characters have learned something important and are looking ahead to doing better the next time 'round," said Mason, who was attracted to the play's sense of naturalism and realism.



From left to right: Jennifer Boyd, David Snyder, Jeremy Southard and Jason Griffin rehearse an emotional point in the play *Diviners*, which opens the University Theater's second season tonight at 8.

*The Diviners* opens the University Theater's second season tonight at 8 in Villard Hall's Arena Theatre, 1109 Old Campus Lane. Additional 8 p.m. performances are scheduled for

Jan. 23-25, 30-31 and Feb. 1.

Tickets, \$3 for students and senior citizens and \$4 general admission, are available at the University Theatre box office,

located in the lobby of the Robinson Theatre. The box office is open from 12:30 to 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday and from 6:30 to 8:15 p.m. on performance nights.

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## ALSOP

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The latter is of special significance to Alsop. She not only knew Leonard Bernstein personally, but has the unprecedented honor of being twice awarded the Leonard Bernstein Conducting Fellowship to the Tanglewood Music Festival in 1988 and 1989.

Alsop had decided to do the Bernstein Festival even before the American composer died in October 1990. "I was hoping he'd come out and listen," she said. "He knew about it and was excited."

Alsop chose one lesser-known Bernstein work to highlight each of the four concerts in the series. "Most of his orchestral work isn't well-known," she said. "I wanted to do some of his more serious stuff."

The Eugene Symphony will present Bernstein's "Serenade" Wednesday and Thursday, Jan. 22 and 23, at the Hult Center.

"Bernstein's music is an American landmark and will continue to be," said George Recker, symphony principal trumpet and member of the University music faculty. "His music is very exciting and she (Alsop) really knows it."

"Her repertoire selections are excellent," Recker said. "A symphony shouldn't be a museum piece. It's necessary to play new work and explore what's out there."

Recker is an Alsop fan and said her leadership is "a breath of fresh air."

"She's very easy to work with," he said. "In terms of a working relationship, you couldn't ask for more. She ap-

proaches everything in a helpful manner."

Alsop seems to have developed a similar fondness for the Eugene Symphony. Because she spends half of each year in New York conducting the Long Island Philharmonic and Concordia and travels frequently, the shift from coast to coast isn't always easy.

In New York, music is a cut-throat, back-stabbing business and you need cynicism to survive, Alsop said. When she returns to Eugene, "it takes a few days to be a nice person again," she said.

Eugene Symphony members seem to take it in stride. "They have a great spirit," Alsop said of the 85-member orchestra.

Keown said Alsop seems to be well-liked. "She knows what she wants, but she doesn't step on your toes by telling you how to do it," he said.

Because it's not a full-time job, Eugene Symphony musicians also work elsewhere, she said. Music teachers, mailmen, students, and people who work in electronics and computers, among others, make up the group.

Keown, Recker, seven other University faculty members and eight University graduate and doctoral students play in the orchestra during its September-May season.

The next concert in the Bernstein series will be May 7 and features pianist Dean Kramer of the University music faculty. The symphony will perform Bernstein's Symphony No. 2, "The Age of Anxiety."

Alsop's "String Fever" will perform Feb. 27. Tickets are available at the EMU Main Desk Store, at the Hult Center or by calling 687-5000.

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