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EQUUS
 by Peter Shaffer
 University Theatre
 November 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21 • 8pm
 University Theatre Box Office 346-4191

Disability no handicap with Access Theatre

"Disability is not a brave struggle, or courage in the face of adversity. It's an art — an ingenious way to live," playwright Neil Marcus said.
 Marcus, 33, describes himself as "a fantastic spastic mime creatively endowed with disability." "Storm Reading" is his theatrical celebration of his unique life. His "storm" is a rare and incurable neurological disorder called dystonic musculorum deformans.
 The play is touring with Access Theatre, a Santa Barbara, Cal., theater company that specializes in integrating disabled and able-bodied actors. It is the only totally accessible professional theater organization in the nation.
 Marcus' association with Access Theatre started three years ago when director Rod Latham read his work and heard a tape of him reading.
 "The people in the reading came to life," Latham said. "It was the first positive material I had received. All the manuscripts coming to us dealt with handicaps in negative, bitter ways, and I wanted something that celebrated life." While society stereotypes Marcus as being limited in all aspects of life, he said, "Neil is one of the most unlimited, unrestricted, creative people I have ever met."
 In the play Marcus is onstage in his wheelchair and portrays himself through a series of vignettes based on real-life incidents. Matthew Ingersoll gives his voice to Marcus' script and Kathryn Voice translates in American sign language while they act the parts of 50 characters.
 Their characters show the range of reactions Marcus encounters, from compassion and friendliness to insensitivities rooted in fear. They include a curious child and his nervous mother, a Burger King employee trying to understand Marcus' drive-up order and an artist enraptured with the raw power of Marcus' movements.
 They come and go in the vignettes with a changing background of color slides on a stage set with abstract sculptures. The scenes are accompanied by an original musical score.
 Marcus describes "Storm Reading" as "bits and pieces of one man's life, with observations,
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Access Theatre's Neil Marcus, Kathryn Voice and Matthew Ingersoll (clockwise from left) perform at the Hult Center Nov. 20 and 21.



Elizabeth Ramirez, a specialist in dramaturgy, is a new theater arts faculty member.

Dramaturgy revived with Ramirez

By Ming Rodrigues
 Emerald Contributor
 Think of theater and the hard work of directors, actors and set designers in creating a quality production come to mind. Little thought, however, is granted to the dramaturg. In fact, little, if anything, is known about this cohesive force behind the scenes.
 The University's theater arts department didn't either until Elizabeth Ramirez arrived. With a background in theater history and criticism, Ramirez said that until recently even defining the term was next to impossible, let alone understanding the role of the dramaturg. Today, Ramirez said, "Every director that I have ever worked with that had never worked with a dramaturg in the past now can't imagine working without one."
 Helping the director understand the social and historical context of the play is the dramaturg's priority. With a new play, Ramirez's responsibility is to ensure that the production stays on the right track. It is an objective role. "The dramaturg sits back and sees the total pic-
 ture," Ramirez said. When a director gets too involved in the process and intentions of the play, it's easy to lose some focus. This is when a dramaturg steps in with critical objectivity. "Someone has to ensure that the director and the playwright work together. The dramaturg is someone who helps the director accomplish what needs to be done as well as helps the playwright recognize flaws in the structure," she said.
 This broad vision also extends to the audience. Through program notes and an outreach project, currently in the works, to familiarize people with theater, Ramirez believes in educating the audience. "We don't just tell the audience what the play is about, but more important, we tell them why they see what they see."
 Ramirez began in Germany in the 1970s, where she did research and document information about the period of the play. "We must examine the contributions to culture by a society and what its values, beliefs and
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A beat for the feet

By Freya Horn
 Entertainment Editor
 Eugene is in for a beatwave tonight with the Irene Farrera Tropical Band.
 Band founder Irene Farrera was born in rural Venezuela and learned to play the guitar at age nine. Farrera laughed when she spoke of her young infatuation with the guitar. "When I walked down the road, people who knew me would ask, 'How is your guitar today?' instead of 'How are you?' because I always carried it with me," she said.
 Currently residing in Southern Oregon, Farrera continues her devotion to music in the vibrant Latin American tradition that she grew up with. Her endeavors will soon culminate in a commercial breakthrough with the December release of her band's new recording, "Walking in the Jungle."
 Farrera composed the music and lyrics for all eight of the songs, which come to life with her deep, soft voice. Her vocals and acoustic guitar are accompanied by the other four highly skilled musicians of the dynamic Tropical Band.
 Mike Fitch of Ashland, Ore., creates rhythmic, hypnotizing drum beats that blend with the intense, grounding bass of Al Criado, who comes from Cuba and was formerly of the Dave Valentin Group. Multi-instrumentalist Sean McCoy, son of the renowned jazz pianist Pat Moran-McCoy, alternates between the keyboard, trumpet, fluegel horn and EVI. Percussionist Theresa Knight comes most recently from Los Angeles, where she worked a number of film scores.
 "Music has a way of going right into the hearts of people," Farrera said. "It breaks down our differences and helps us overcome all those barriers we put on ourselves."
 Symbolic of this philosophy is Farrera's ability to sing in English, Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese. She said her choice of language depends on which one flows most naturally with the melody, giving her songs fluidity and diversity.
 "Our music transcends geographical borders," she said, "and our message is one of unity and understanding among all the peoples and races of the world."
 In delivering this message, Farrera's songs convey universal themes. For example, "The Same Sea" is a subtle yet powerful song against racism. With it she uses the analogy of "the same sea, the same sun" to show how we are all "the same people" because we are unified by our relation to the Earth, she said.
 The Irene (pronounced Ee-neh) Farrera Tropical Band has played at the Eugene Celebration for three years in a row and was the Saturday night headliner at the 1992 Willamette Valley Folk Festival. Tonight they play at the EMU Beer Garden beginning at 5. Doors open at 4 p.m. and there will be a \$1 cover. They will also perform later in the evening at John Henry's.



Irene Farrera performs in the EMU tonight.

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