

# Assassins

hit the

# STAGE

Story by  
D. Lee Williams

Photos by  
Michael Shindler

Grown people running through silly situations and singing even sillier songs. Entertaining but empty-headed. The waste product of the cultural elite. If this is what you think of musicals, then *Assassins*, the current University Theatre production of the latest Stephen Sondheim work, will take a well-aimed shot to your head, open your mind and altogether blow away your former opinion.

"Despite its political context, *Assassins* is essentially concerned with the human need for self-respect," Robert Urbinati, a graduate theatre major from New York City and the show's director, said, adding that by exploring the lives of fascinating characters with poignancy and mordant humor, the play shows how deep alienation can cut.

While this is true, the timing of the production can't be ignored. Placed perfectly after an election and before an inauguration, *Assassins* plays in the Arena Theatre at 8 tonight and Saturday night and then resumes for evening performances Dec. 8-12. Sunday matinees will be held Dec. 6 and 13.

*Assassins*, you see, is a musical revue of killers. Its 17 scenes are based on the lives of nine of the 13 people who have attempted or succeeded in killing the President of the United States. It's a glorious parade of American history's Most Wanted. The play

is funny, moving and frightening, and Urbinati's cast and crew are so convincing you'll think you've stumbled Sherman-like into Mr. Peabody's time machine.

*Assassins*, which ran in New York in 1991 and is currently running in London, features scathing satirical songs by Sondheim, who won the Pulitzer Prize for "Sunday In The Park With George" and put the Oscar-winning song "Sooner Or Later" in Madonna's mouth. Based on a biting book by John Weidman, the play has little concern for the "hows" of each assassination attempt. Instead, Weidman wisely focuses on the "whys" behind the tries.

The most famous assassins — John Wilkes Booth, John Hinckley, Jr., Charles Guiteau, and Lee Harvey Oswald — are opened up brilliantly by Jeff Whitty, Bryce Britton, Dave Sikula, and Justin Guadagni, respectively. And the near-infamous are equally exposed. Brooke Totman as "Squeaky" Fromme is a hippy masterpiece. Sharing a joint and a bucket of KFC, she and fellow wannabe Ford assassin Sara Jane Moore swap funny and cheesy memories of Charlie Manson. Kate Donovan is perfect as Moore, right down to her 1970s panty lines. She is the harried housewife trying to schedule an assassination in between mall stops and PTA meetings. Donovan has a natural, fumbling flair for physical and facial gestures.



Charlie Bradshaw as McKinley's killer and Kristopher Cochran as Roosevelt's would-be assassin bring to life all the pent-up emotions of their misfit proletariat assassins. David Brooks is eerily excellent as Sam Byck, and in his killer Santa suit he moves from frustration and humor to fear and anger with frightening ease. We believe Byck really will crash a plane into Nixon's White House.



The University Theatre presents *Assassins*, an audacious new musical revue of people who have killed or attempted to kill United States Presidents, in the Arena Theatre through Dec. 13. The cast of *Assassins* includes: Charlie Bradshaw, Bryce Britton, David Brooks, Kristopher Cochran, Kate Donovan, Justin Guadagni, Brooke Totman and Jeff Whitty.

These actors have the more difficult job of bringing understanding to uncelebrated assassins, and they succeed. In fact, every cast member is chillingly right for their role, not only looking and sounding their parts but "feeling" their parts as well. The actors seem to take great pleasure in their anti-hero roles. They see the play for what it is: a dark celebration of man's creepy curiosity — the same curiosity that eases our foot to the brakepad as we pass a roadside accident. We are scared and repulsed but we watch. We want to know them because "them" could have been "us."

But in no way is *Assassins* dreary or down. Credit the musical numbers (musical direction by Dennis Davenport and choreography by Rachel Waite) for boldly going where no musical has gone before. Songs like "Another National Anthem" — with the assassins asking "Where's my prize?" — deftly being simplified into smokescreen folk tunes and showstopping revivalist hymns.

Sikula, who plays Garfield's killer, is especially good singing "Look on the bright side" as his execution noose hangs before him. The number is a great musical dis on *Annie*'s sickly sweet "Tomorrow, Tomorrow." And Hinckley serenading his 8 X 10 glossy of Jodie Foster will shoot a chill (unrelated to the cold theatre) up your spine. Justin Stafford as the Balladeer does a great job of stringing the scenes together by song, but Whitty as Booth hits the musical high, and seems to have a vocal range that, if pushed, would send Michael Crawford packing back to "Star Search" semifinals. And "Everybody's Got The Right," a song which could've been gun-control preachy, is not.

The songs and book are more complex than cause-of-the-moment politics. This is good theatre, not bad *Murphy Brown*. Proof of the

play's complexity comes near the end, when Booth confronts Oswald. This tight scene brings Kennedy's death back to the reachable, human level, virtually erasing Oliver Stone's grand and mythic JFK.

Jeff Cook's set design is oddly fitting — not bright stars and stripes, but subdued layers of frumpy flags, apparently sewn by a badly PMS'ing Betsy Ross. Deanna Sorenson's costumes have the same great incongruity — bright colors cover the happy bystanders who are lucky enough to glimpse the shot at Roosevelt. And the lighting by Molly Eness makes sense, too: the sets are bathed in lots of American Dream gold.

All in all, Urbinati's production makes a big impression from its little stage. And for this reason, *Assassins* must be seen. It is that rare theatrical thing: a musical with a mind. And a musical with a mind is a terrible thing to waste.

## INTERESTED IN BECOMING A TEACHER?

Pacific University offers an innovative, year-long Fifth-Year/M.A.T. program for liberal arts graduates leading to teacher licensure in:  
Elementary Education Music Foreign Languages  
Social Studies Art Business Education  
Math Science Physical Education  
Language Arts Biology Physics

Apply now for the program beginning June 1993 at the Forest Grove campus. Application deadline: March 1, 1993. For information contact the Office of Admissions, Pacific University, 2043 College Way, Forest Grove, OR 97116 or call (503) 354-2218 or 1-800-677-6712.

**PACIFIC UNIVERSITY**  
OREGON

## Jody Coyote Local Jewelry Manufacturer JEWELRY WAREHOUSE SALE

Jody Coyote, a local jewelry manufacturer, is selling close-outs and factory seconds at below wholesale prices!! Pay from \$1.00 to \$10.00 for handcrafted sterling silver and goldfill earrings. UP TO 80% OFF OF RETAIL PRICES!! This jewelry at these prices makes great stocking stuffers.

Also, we have a large selection of jewelry making supplies and beads for those who like to make their own earrings — All at rock bottom prices!!

- Close-outs and factory seconds at below wholesale
- Handcrafted sterling silver and goldfill earrings
- Up to 80% off retail prices
- Great for stocking stuffers
- Large selection of jewelry making supplies at rock bottom prices
- Free pair of earrings with this ad

Mastercharge and Visa accepted.

Weekends starting November 27th through December 20th  
10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.  
1205 Oak Patch Rd. off of West 11th

**FREE FRIES**  
Free large fry w/ large pitcher or free small fry with small pitcher of your favorite beverage.  
Monday thru Friday  
4pm to 7pm  
The **MEATING PLACE**  
854 East 13th • 342-2241  
Near to Kinkos

### Mother Kali's Books "Celebrating Women's Lives"



Presents: **Kathleen Alcalá** reading from **Mrs. Vargas and the Dead Naturalist**  
Dec. 12 • 8pm WCA ASL

Now Open Sunday Afternoons til X-mas (12-5pm). Free Parking, 2 blocks East of Agate. 2001 Franklin • 343-4864

\*\*\*\*\*  
SILVERSTAR VIDEO  
\*\*\*\*\*  
2 for 1  
Video Rental of equal or lesser value  
we accept all video cassettes not valid with any other offers  
\$2 OFF  
any video purchase with this coupon  
1888 Franklin Blvd. (next to 7-Eleven on Willard)  
Open 10am to 11pm  
344-2691  
EM - Ex. 1201/92  
\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*  
WUNDERLAND  
5th STREET PUBLIC MARKET  
683-8464  
VIDEO ADVENTURE  
VALLEY RIVER PLAZA  
\*\*\*\*\*

JOHN HENRY'S  
DEER • MUSIC • ARTS  
136 E. 11th • (near Willamette)  
342-3358  
Must be 21 or Over

\*\*\*\*\*  
"REFRESHING" "BRILLIANT"  
A BRIEF HISTORY OF TIME  
COMING MARQUEE  
BUJOU LATE NITE • Late '40s Adm. Th. \$3 / Su. \$2.50 • BUJOU LATE NITE • BUJOU LATE NITE  
INNOCENT BLOOD BUFFY  
\*\*\*\*\*

EMU CULTURAL FORUM PRESENTS  
**PETER ROWAN**  
OPENING THE MAD FARMERS  
W.O.W. HALL  
EMU MAIN DESK C.D. WORLD BALLADEER MUSIC HOUSE OF RECORDS GRASSROOTS CORVALLIS  
\$10 U.O. STUDENTS \$12 GENERAL PUBLIC  
\*\*\*\*\*

**HOUSE OF RECORDS**  
BUY & SELL NEW & USED CD'S, LP'S, & CASSETTES  
258 E. 13th AVENUE  
EUGENE, OREGON, 97401

A famous shopper sez... "I get my gifts from EXCLUSIVELY Adult... It doesn't have to be dirty to be good"  
VIDEOS • TOYS • GIFTS  
NEW! "NAS-T-Shirts"  
Gift Certificates Available  
1166 S. A St., Springfield  
726-6969  
Open 24 Hours  
Locally owned and operated for over 100 years!

\*\*\*\*\*  
95.3 THE KAVE PRESENTS WALT DISNEY'S HONEY I BLEW UP THE KID  
99¢ SPECIAL HOLIDAY PRICE • ALL AGES  
DEC. 4 TO DEC 13 • FRI 8pm  
• SAT 4, 6 & 8pm • SUN 4 & 6pm  
• MON TO FRI (12/7 to 12/11) 6 & 8pm  
• SAT 2pm • SUN 4 & 6pm  
The Mckenzie  
630 Main • Downtown Springfield • 747-8349  
\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*  
Friday Dec. 4 \$4 Dose The Whirlees Joey Kline and the Thrashing Tractors  
Saturday Dec. 5 \$4 Now William Flop (from Seattle) Funnelhead  
Sunday Dec. 6 \$1 An evening of bluegrass with: Fiddlin Sue Uncle T @ Johnny  
Monday Dec. 7 \$3 Vic Chestnut Steve Ibach  
Music Starts at 10pm Mon-Sat Music starts at 8pm Sundays  
\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*  
ACE The 2nd Annual ACE Holiday Musical Actors Cabaret of Eugene Presents  
Is There ROCK N ROLL in Heaven?  
Music of the 50's & 60's  
FRI. & SAT. NIGHTS AT 8:00 PM DEC 4 - JAN 9  
TICKETS: \$10 GEN, \$8 SEN, \$6 STUDENT RUSH  
New Year's Eve Celebration!  
Dec 31, 7:30 pm  
\$45-dinner, Show & Champagne Toast at Midnight  
Tickets at the EMU & Hult Center Ticket Outlets  
Downtown Cabaret • 687-5000 • 996 Willamette  
\*\*\*\*\*