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Curtain Call:

'T-Bone' for the dogs

By D. Lee Williams
Emerald Contributor

T-Bone N Weasel is a bi-chromatic nightmare.

The play, showing March 5 and 6 in the Arena Theater, tracks the exploits of two escaped Southern convicts, one white, one black. Director Grant McKernie calls the show "farical" yet also a "genuine exploration of serious social issues."

So it is — at least on paper — a come-



Left to right: Davon Russell as T-Bone, Jon Egging as Weasel and Richard Egan as a derelict in 'T Bone N Weasel,' a University theater production.

dy-drama. But McKernie's production is barely funny and hardly dramatic. A night spent with this limp play is like a luckless night spent with an impotent 80-year-old: The comedy falls flat and the drama never rises.

But don't blame the actors. That *T-Bone N Weasel* is able to produce even

These inane, initial sit-com-like scenes are supposed to propel the mapless plot, which, in Act II, continues winding around like a drunken driver downtown, hitting all of Eugene's annoying, go-nowhere one-ways.

the least amount of laughter is, in fact, due more to the actors' frenetic blind faith in their roles than to any offstage direction or truly funny dialogue.

And, since all roles are cliches in this play, no one in the cast seems to have trouble going overboard in his characterization: Jon Egging as the wiry, white Weasel gives his role a wild work-out; Richard Egan, playing a doctor, a derelict, and a down-home Southern whore, and Andrew Bauer as a cop, a car-salesman, and a stuttering sweepstakes-winner are both superb stage chameleons. Davon Russell as T-Bone is medium-well.

But all acting efforts are sadly academic. The cast is trapped in a sinkboat of a

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Brenda Wong Aoki, acclaimed storyteller and Kabuki/Noh (traditional Japanese) theater artist.

Storytelling Sorcery

HULT CENTER — If spirits could walk the earth, they would find a voice in Brenda Wong Aoki, a sorceress of storytelling whose tales awaken ancient Asian lore.

Tales of spirits past and present will prevail when Aoki presents her latest collection of stories in "OBAKE!" (oh-bah'-kay), which means "ghost" in Japanese.

She adapts three of her "Obake" stories — "Black Hair," "Havoc in Heaven" and "The Bell of Dojoji" — from ancient Chinese and Japanese fables.

Aoki transforms into an arrogant husband, a loving wife and a venomous, wealthy woman in "Black Hair," a tale of a man who discovers he can't regain the wonderful wife he left for a world of unhappy wealth.

A generous and loving girl refuses to acknowledge the rejection of a Buddhist monk she loves in "The Bell of Dojoji." Instead, she pursues him and transforms into a snake. Aoki calls this a Japanese version of "Women Who Love Too Much."

"Havoc in Heaven" provides comic relief between

more haunting tales. Aoki plays the famous Monkey King, who tricks death and the gods and eats so much that he groans from the complete overdose of his lower chakra.

With "Dancing in California," Aoki turns from ancient fables to WWII California, where a Japanese-American ballerina's career is shattered when she is forced into a "relocation" camp.

Aoki performs on a bare stage with only her Japanese Noh fan (used to portray a sake cup, a tray and other props), a short rod and her long hair. She carves woods, castles, animals and spirits out of thin air with a few simple twists of her fingers and expressive face.

"I do traditional Kabuki/Noh drama from the perspective of a woman, a completely different perspective than the traditional style presents," Aoki said. "This is, in fact, the most unique thing about my stories. They unfold from a personal point of view rather than from the universal."

Aoki's energetic blend of modern dance with traditional Japanese Noh and Kyogen theater, spiced with some western vocal techniques, earned her a reputa-

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