

Rhythm *of* Reviews

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A pocket full of plays

"People come to the Pocket Playhouse to see what the students can do as directors."

—David Hess, senior in theater arts.

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Oregon Daily Emerald

The Pocket Playhouse may be one of the University's best kept secrets. Since the initial renovation of Villard Hall in 1949, the Pocket Playhouse has served as a laboratory for student theater and as a cutting-edge theatre space.

Joseph Gilg, University Theatre development director, said the Pocket Theatre was originally called Theatre at Four-Thirty.

The shows moved into a 5 p.m. time slot, and for the last 10 years the Pocket Playhouse has been a mainstay for experimental theatre on campus, Gilg said.

The mission of the Pocket Playhouse is to be accessible to anyone on campus and to provide decent theatre for students by students, without censorship or direct faculty involvement.

Every May students can apply for membership on the Pocket Playhouse Board, which meets weekly. Nine students currently serve on the board.

Mame Pelletier, who serves as board secretary, said the Pocket covers the spectrum of student involvement.

Student Involvement

The Pocket Playhouse produces about 15 to 20 shows a year. Students can apply to direct and produce plays in the 72-seat Pocket Playhouse each term. Application packets are available on the bulletin board outside the green room in Villard Hall to any student on campus.

The application requires students to include information about the play they want to produce and whether it is an original work or has royalty fees attached to it. They must also fully explain the casting, their need for a stage manager and any other components that make the show appropriate for the Pocket's stage.

Currently, the Pocket board is recruiting students, particularly those who are not theater arts majors. Melody Bates, co-chairwoman of the Pocket board, says the selection process has nothing to do with a student's association with the theater department.

Because the past year has had a smaller season, anyone who is interested in theatre can gain experience by working on productions as either actors, technical assistants, playwrights and stage crew.

"We're very interested in getting any student who has a script written or is interested in getting a script finished," Bates said.

Director applicants go through an interview process before the Pocket Playhouse Board. After signing a contract, directors are on their own. Some shows are more sophisticated than others and require a sound manager, lighting design and a full crew.

Bates said that although the bulk of the work falls on the director, the main goal is for



Cara Keenan rehearses her part as Mrs. Buchanan with Justin Davanzo who plays the part of John Buchanan Jr. They will be performing the play *Eccentricity's of the Nightingale* beginning May 3rd.

students to be involved and bring their talents together to create great shows.

Funding

The Pocket Playhouse is a student-funded operation, supported from the incidental fee process, and receives an annual budget of approximately \$1,500. Most of the funds cover the costs of royalty fees for each performance of the show.

Each director receives \$50 for their show. Pocket Playhouse treasurer Tilden Moschetti said that money generally only covers the cost of painting sets.

Moschetti said that the Pocket board also fund raises and sells concessions at Mainstage productions at the Robinson and Arena theatres to help support itself as well.

Admission to shows is a suggested \$1 donation. Pocket productions take place on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings from 5 to 6:30 p.m. This prevents students who may be involved in main-stage productions from running into conflicts with rehearsal schedules or other commitments.

Bringing It All Together

Students do need to make a serious commitment to the shows they intend to put on in the Pocket Playhouse. Most students set their cast, following an open audition, and from there preparation for a show may take as long as two months before a play is up and running.

Lia Salciccia and Kelsey Tyler, co-directors of *The Well of Horniness*, began work on their upcoming production months in advance of the performance dates. The play was written by Holly Hughes and is a comedy with an entire cast of women. It is co-sponsored by the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Alliance.



Ursula Aller, who plays Alma Winemiller, rehearses with Mike Doherty, who plays Roger Doremus, in the Pocket Playhouse.

"Each production brings its own special stuff that happens in the Pocket, which wouldn't happen in the Arena or in the Mainstage," Salciccia said.

The cast meets five times a week for the three weeks previous to the show's opening, rehearsing 90 minutes each day. And the show will only run three days. This shows the level of dedication that students put into a show.

David Hess, who works as a technical director for many Pocket productions said "the advantage of the Pocket is that it usually gives people their first opportunity to see what they can do. Many people get their first little bit of technical training and incoming actors get to get their feet wet."

Cast member Coyote Harris believes that working in the Pocket is "all for experience and for personal growth."