Three new comedies to be mounted at Lord Leebrick Theatre

■ **PLAYWRIGHTS:** Eugene-Springfield playwrights will premiere their work

By Anne Moser-Kornfeld
Entertainment Editor

A comedy of manners, a "twentysomething" episodic collection of events and a comedy focusing on the battle of the sexes make up the mainstage productions at this year's Northwest Playwrights Series.

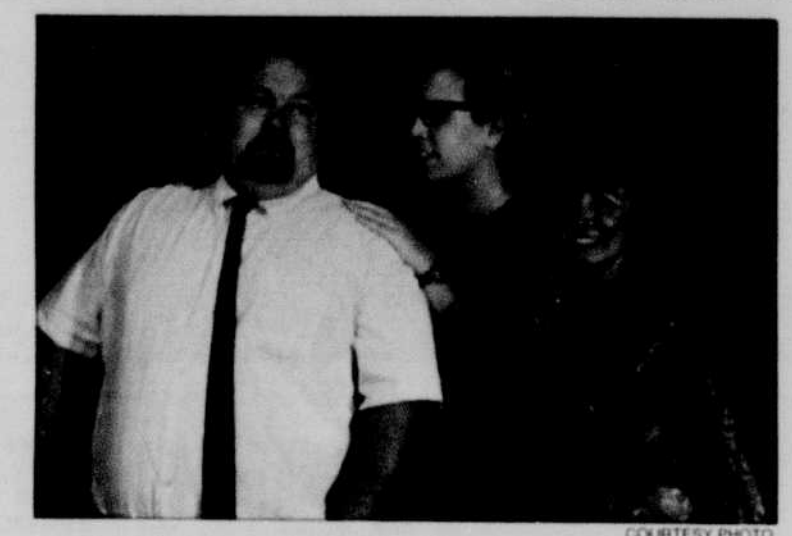
The second annual event, held at The Lord Leebrick Theatre Company at 540 Charnelton St. in Eugene, brings together the talents of area residents Dorothy Velasco, Russell Dyball and Richard Reed.

Each playwright's vision takes on a life of its own, and with the help of the cast and crew members of the Lord Leebrick Theatre, these playwrights are able to see their plays come to life.

Velasco's play is titled *Mother May I* and is based on the story of a self-styled guru, Mother Maya. Mother Maya meets up with a senator whom Velasco said is a caricature of Bob Packwood.

Velasco said she is always writing a new play and that she appreciates the process of collaboration that working in theater allows her to develop.

She said *Mother May I* is full of costumes and dance. For Velasco, the Northwest Playwrights Series is "a great time to try out a first production of a play that has only had a couple of readings."



COURTESY PHOTO

Dorothy Velasco's play, *Mother May I*, stars T. John Hoard as Sen. Harris Pettigren, Maike Jacobi as Portia and Nicole McKenna as Maya.

Dyball, 25, took from the experiences he had with some friends and "twisted them a little bit" to come up with his play, *Breeders and Brooders*. The cast consists of University students and is based on events common to most college-age students.

The play is "very episodic and challenges the audience to stick with the story because one scene is three weeks following another," Dyball said, adding that the play is also about people getting beyond the nasty and external aspects of their personalities.

Dyball said he is really excited about the whole series and that he believes the concept "gives a lot opportunity" for developing new plays.

Reed, who wrote the play *Toilet Wars*, shares that sentiment with Dyball. "If it wasn't for the competition, my play wouldn't have seen the light of day," he said.

Dyball said *Toilet Wars* "explores those aspects of life we often take for granted — the subtle and pervasive dominance between males and females. It touches people in a really deep, deep place."

The playwrights are aware there are very few events nationwide enabling them to strengthen their writing ability, and as Reed said, the Northwest Playwrights Series offers them a "wonderful chance to prove themselves."

Northwest Playwrights Series designed to serve local writers

■ **THEATER:** The Lord Leebrick Theatre Company festival is in its second year

By Anne Moser-Kornfeld
Entertainment Editor

The project director for the Northwest Playwrights Series began the multifaceted event based on his belief that no one in the immediate area had been producing original plays.

Richard Leebrick said the idea snowballed from a simple concept of placing the emphasis on workshop production for the playwright.

"The Northwest Playwrights Series serves the playwright," Leebrick said. "The whole thrust is an opportunity to work and develop scripts."

The second annual series runs from today to Aug. 27 at The Lord Leebrick Theatre Company, 540 Charnelton St. in Eugene.

The work of Northwest playwrights will be showcased in an alternating repertory schedule. The series consists of three fully mounted productions, which are plays that include entire casts, sets, costume and lighting changes, and three evenings of staged readings, where actors read directly from a script and leave the play up to an audience's imagination.

"The series began last year and this year's process began in late March," Leebrick said. "It's a seven-person reading committee, with fairly specific criteria [and] technical requirements — and selected scripts that all happen to be written by local, Lane County residents."

The full-scale performances run from Thursday to Saturday at 8 p.m., with Sunday matinees at 2 p.m. Stage readings begin at 7 p.m. on Sunday evenings.

The ticket prices for the series are $5 for each show and $3 for the readings. An informal question and response session with the playwright, director and cast will follow the Sunday matinees.

Audiences will hear new plays under development and experience the premiere of new plays that Leebrick said "show how the event is a pretty soulful process."

For more information, call The Lord Leebrick Theatre at 465-1506.

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