

Arena Theatre production to tell 'shattered' narrative

Short, disconnected scenes typify 'Woyzeck,' creating 'shattered' effect

By Thomas Valinoti
Freelance Reporter

The Arena Theatre will open its 1997-98 season with "Woyzeck," a play with contemporary themes and historic roots.

Playwright Georg Buchner, who wrote this German drama in the 19th century, tells the story of a neurotic worker who is eventually driven to homicidal insanity because of the oppressive and absurd society in which he lives.

This adaptation of the classic play, however, is far from standard.

Director Heather Lindsley has taken the original script in new and different directions. Still present are the fragmented episodes in which the play is presented, but Lindsley has changed the atmosphere of the play into a carnival setting. The play focuses on dysfunctional society, but now with a modern twist.

Lindsley says the characters in "Woyzeck" would fit very naturally into a carnival or even a freakshow. "They are constantly on uncomfortable display — like the animals at a disreputable circus," she said. "And like a traveling carnies, the play manages to be both entertaining and slightly disturbing."

"What makes 'Woyzeck' so contemporary is that Buchner's



Woyzeck, played by Ursula Aller, kneels over the body of Marie, played by Shelly Swearingen.

short, disconnected scenes force his shattered characters to move in an equally shattered narrative."

Buchner died unexpectedly at the age of 24. The play was unfinished at that point, which seems to add an irony to the themes of

fragmentation and dysfunctionality that underline the play.

The play was produced infrequently for the first three decades after Buchner's death. It was, however, rediscovered in the early 20th century and is now considered to be a landmark work of

expressionism.

"The fact that [Lindsley] is putting this into a circus setting, even to [put] wood shavings on the floor ... I think it's going to be quite intriguing. The whole concept is that [Buchner] preceded Ibsen with his version of angst

and alienation in society and the individual," said Karen Scheeland of the University Theatre.

"Woyzeck" will be performed by an all-female ensemble cast featuring Jessica Grindell, Ursula Aller, Sabrina Bernasconi and Sarah Scott Dyrhaug. Also starring are Anne Oxenhandler, Jennifer Steward, Stacia Jensen, Kate Reding, Kristen Winchell, Shelly Swearingen and Holly Thomas. The actors range from sophomores to seniors, and they are all enrolled in the University's Theatre Arts program.

"Woyzeck" will open Wednesday, Nov. 19 and will continue through Nov. 22. After Thanksgiving, it will open again from Dec. 4 through 6. All shows will begin at 8 p.m. in the Arena Theatre, 204 Villard.

Tickets are \$3 for University students, \$6 for adults and \$5 for senior citizens, University faculty and staff and non-University students.

Free parking is available in the East 11th Avenue and Kincaid Street parking lot.

Tickets can be purchased at the EMU ticket office (346-4363) or the University Theatre box office in Robinson Theatre from noon to 6 p.m.

The box office is open Tuesday through Friday, noon to 8:15 p.m. on performance days. For more information, call 485-2000 ext. 2287 or visit the University Theatre's Web site at darkwing.uoregon.edu/~theatre/.

Lecture series to address the question, 'Who owns the West?'

The series will give students a forum to discuss the future of the West with author David James Duncan

By Samuel Giaconi
Freelance Reporter

The direction Western society is heading will be the topic of a lecture series coming to the University.

University students interested in discussing this subject will have an opportunity Nov. 19 during a lecture series titled "Who Owns the West?" The series will be put on by Kerry Hoover, a private organizer and producer.

"This series will give young people an opportunity to discuss the future of the West," Hoover said. "It will bring together a number of perspectives on how we can best achieve this." Hoover, an Ashland native, ran a similar series at Southern Oregon University and would like to involve University students.

The lecture will be held in 150 Columbia at 7:30 p.m. and will give students a chance to discuss social changes and environmental problems that are a part of Western society.

The lecture series includes Portland native David James Duncan, author of the novels "The River Why" and "The Brothers K." Duncan's interest in environmental problems stems from his life in Oregon, where environmental issues, such as the depletion of native forests and salmon, have been debated for many years.

"Growing up in Oregon and watching the timber industry tear down our native forests and watching the salmon become endangered was difficult," Duncan said. "I hope my lecture will give young people a chance to listen to my experiences and be able to share their own ideas."

Duncan will discuss the ideals of Western civilization. He believes many of these ideals have been hypocritical because of the United States' treatment of Native Americans.

At the end of Duncan's lecture, students will have an opportunity to share their feelings. Duncan admits that many times discussions concerning environmental issues are "difficult because people can be very emotional about their concerns over these issues."

However, he hopes his lecture will provide an environment in which everyone feels free to speak.

"I want to create a positive environment that allows all students an opportunity to voice their concerns on this issue, because it's important to have a good sense of humor when discussing these problems," Duncan said. "We will try to find solutions to these problems that will allow us to co-exist as people in our society, no matter what our opinions may be."

Tickets are available through the EMU ticket office or by calling 346-4363. They can also be purchased at the door.

Tickets cost \$12.50 for general admission and \$10 for students.

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■ **WHAT:** A lecture: "Ten Wrong Answers to the Question, 'Who Owns the West?'"

■ **WHEN:** Nov. 19 at 7:30 p.m.

■ **WHERE:** 150 Columbia

■ **WHY:** To examine the future of the West

■ **WHO:** David James Duncan, author of the book "The River Why" and a collection of essays titled "River Teeth." The New York Times hailed "The River Why" as "a whirlwind, madcap, humorous and sensitive novel."

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