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# 'The Zoo Story' revisits themes of past with new student cast

■ Meet Peter and Jerry in Edward Albee's commentary on love, hate and humanity



## 'The Zoo Story'

Edward Albee

★★★☆☆

By Mason West  
Oregon Daily Emerald

We are animals, and we live in a zoo.

That is the basic premise behind Edward Albee's play "The Zoo Story," starting today in the Pocket Playhouse at 5 p.m. The play was originally performed in the United States in the 1960s when the theme was something of a new idea. Today it initiates an ingrained "duh" response.

The concept that we have an animal nature seems so obvious that it doesn't need repeating. But, is that because we've really thought about it, or have we just brushed it off?

Keeping that question in mind, "The Zoo Story" presents the scope

of human interaction boiled down to two guys in Central Park. The older man, Peter, is a book publisher with a wife, two daughters, two cats and two parakeets; he is happily plugged into society. The younger man, Jerry, is a disenchanted vagrant who lives in a "laughably small room" and skates on the brink of society and sanity.

Peter is quietly reading a book while sitting on a bench when Jerry comes along saying he just went to the zoo. Through this random interjection, he initiates an awkward conversation/interrogation with Peter that starts out with trivial pleasantries and ends with big philosophical questions about love and hate.

Albee makes the two emotions inseparable, calling their combination "the teaching emotion." Jerry's coarse personality makes Peter hate him so much that they become bonded by the strength of that emotion. Jerry offers a microcosm within the microcosmic play through the story of his attempted murder of his landlady's dog for attacking him as he enters his building; He tried to love the dog and failed. He tried to kill the

dog and failed. But having experienced both emotions, he finally connected with the creature, and they reached an understanding.

The play requires skilled actors because each part carries equal importance, but in completely separate ways. Ninety percent of the dialogue is spoken by Jerry, played by freshman Jay Hash. While Hash starts strong, he doesn't cover enough emotional ground to sustain the audience's interest. To contrast Jerry's bombast, Peter, played by sophomore Adam Leonard, must provide sufficient action and response to make the audience believe that a real human being would actually listen to Jerry babble. Like Hash, Leonard isn't quite up to the task.

The problem is that no real person would either talk that long or listen that long. The demands on the actors are large, and it would be surprising to see any college actors perform to perfection.

The play runs today, Friday and Saturday at 5 p.m. in Villard Hall.

Mason West is the senior Pulse reporter for the Oregon Daily Emerald. He can be reached at [masonwest@dailyemerald.com](mailto:masonwest@dailyemerald.com).

## Mulholland

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she eventually finds out that Rita has lost her memory as a result of the accident and doesn't even know why she came to this apartment. Instead of being freaked out that an amnesiac stranger is in her aunt's apartment, Betty decides to help Rita unravel the mystery of her identity.

As this duo sleuths through the film, reality drifts away. Like side thoughts to their search, seemingly unrelated scenes are interjected along the way such as a hilarious scene where a director, Adam, is

told by two men to cast a certain girl in his movie. These scenes are confusing, especially because this movie is not comical, but they become important in making connections later.

The film falls into complete surrealism after Betty and Rita visit an avant-garde theater called "Silencio" where the performances are mimed to a recorded soundtrack. There, the showman tells the audience (both the avant-garde audience and the movie's audience) to be on its toes because "it is all an illusion." Keeping this in mind will ultimately lead the viewer to a manageable conclusion.

After seeing the film, it must be defined or dismissed. To leave the movie in the form Lynch leaves it would cause many sleepless nights haunted by frustration and confusion. Not everyone may want to take up the task Lynch sets forth. Watching the movie is more work than entertainment, especially during the painfully slow first hour. The best thing to do is watch

the movie with an open mind and not expect any answers.

Questions are left for the audience because not all ends of the plot are tied together. Lynch went way out there and wasn't capable of taking the audience all the way with him. If the plot strands of this movie were represented by actual string and spread on the floor, the resulting lines would look like the road maps of 10 major cities laid on top of one another.

The New York Times review by Stephen Holden stated correctly that if this movie is looked at lightly, it is silly. But, Holden says, if it is looked at with intrigue, its reward is a feeling of accomplishment that won't be found in any cookie-cutter Hollywood flick. Other films that resonate with "Mulholland Drive" are "Jacob's Ladder" and "Memento"—though those films seem so simple when compared to this one.

Mason West is the senior Pulse reporter for the Oregon Daily Emerald. He can be reached at [masonwest@dailyemerald.com](mailto:masonwest@dailyemerald.com).

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