

# Students create diverse theater

■ The Multicultural Reader's Theater Group reads plays by contemporary playwrights that address multicultural issues

By Anna Seeley  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Without lavish sets or fancy costumes, a new kind of theater group on campus is working to address multicultural issues using only the words of plays.

The Multicultural Reader's Theater Group, started by two University students, is seeking to expose multicultural issues and fill a void in the performance of multicultural playwrights. The group meets once a week to read plays by contemporary playwrights that address multicultural issues, performing arts coordinator Windy Borman said. And the students intend to perform some of the plays for audiences.

Eric-Michael MacCionnaith, coordinator for the theater group, said one goal of the group is to expose students to work they may never encounter elsewhere. He added that his interest in under-represented works of drama was a reason he wanted to form the theater group.

"With all the talk of multiculturalism

on campus, I thought that this would be a good opportunity to expand the University's mission," he said.

The group meets every Sunday at 4 p.m. in the Arena Theatre in Villard Hall to read plays. MacCionnaith said the group will read through about eight plays and then decide on two or three to perform. Alice Childress's play "Wine in the Wilderness" — a play about African American culture — is a play the group has read.

"These plays often deal directly with issues surrounding minority relations, racism, culture, stereotypes or other topics relevant to women or minority groups," he said.

During their performances, the actors will read the plays and mime some small actions, Borman said. The actors will each read a part in the play and someone will act as narrator, she said. The group's first performance will be Thursday at 6:30 p.m. in the Ben Linder Room.

"It is a low stress version of putting on a play," Borman said. "We will be focusing on the words and issues the play addresses."

MacCionnaith said a broad range of students from different departments across campus are participating in the group, not just theater majors. He said

students chose to participate for a variety of reasons, including an interest in multicultural issues and a desire to expand their play base.

"Some want to explore multicultural theater, others want to have an opportunity to perform," he said. "Others would like to increase their drama knowledge base."

Theater group member Katie MacCionnaith agrees.

"I think it's important for multicultural plays to be heard and seen," she said.

Eric-Michael MacCionnaith said the theater group is an ongoing project. If others are interested, they can just show up at the group's meeting, and the group will have something for the participant to read through, he said. He added that the group wants to build a bridge between departments and others on campus who are interested in multicultural theater, and it is looking for input.

"It is my hope," Eric-Michael MacCionnaith said, "that this project will develop into a cohesive company of actor readers who will continue to read and bring their own ideas on content to the process."

Anna Seeley is a student activities reporter for the Oregon Daily Emerald. She can be reached at [annaseeley@dailyemerald.com](mailto:annaseeley@dailyemerald.com).

## News brief

### Eugene drivers take the Challenge

Sixty-five teams are competing in this week's Eugene Commute Challenge, which is sponsored by the City Transportation department. Besides driving alone in a car to work, teams can use any method of transportation to participate in the week-long event,

which will climax Wednesday with a one-day contest.

"We promote the whole week to get people thinking that if they commute one day a week, they can make a huge difference," said Diane Bishop, the bicycle coordinator for Eugene. "But Wednesday is the day we actually count."

This is the second year of the Commute Challenge. Bishop said she targets businesses for the event

because it has more impact than just approaching individuals.

"The camaraderie of work — that idea of everyone working together — helps," she said.

The businesses are a mix of public and private agencies. Two University teams have entered the competition: One team is from the Knight Library and the other is from the planning, public policy and management department.

— Sue Ryan

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