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Kesey's intentions shine in UO Theatre production

The version of 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest' shifts focus away from the more widely-known film

By Ryan Nyburg
Senior Pulse Reporter

A new production of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" does not strike me as an easy undertaking. Ken Kesey's novel of the same name is widely considered an American classic, the original Broadway

THEATER REVIEW

adaptation launched the careers of many of its stars and the 1975 film adaptation by Milos Forman is such a part of the cultural consciousness that it is difficult to see anyone else playing these roles. The fact that the University Theatre production has its own original vision of the work, however, is such an accomplishment that I find myself feeling more favorably inclined to it than I might be otherwise.

The play is helmed by veteran director Rob Urbinati, and the cast is composed of many reliable players from around the University, including some fresh off of the recent revival of "This Ship of Fools." A talented group of actors under the direction of a professional is all fine and dandy, but it means nothing if they can't do anything interesting with the work. Fortunately, they

seem perfectly capable of originality.

The story of a rebellious new inmate at a nameless mental institution is well known to anyone who took a high school literature class, so the real interest lies in the themes covered by the adaptation. One misconception about the original novel is that it was an anti-authoritarian text of the counterculture, when in fact it was written before 1960s counterculture really got going. Kesey's book aimed at a more spiritual release than a political one, so when most people think of the anti-authoritarian elements in the story they are actually thinking of the film adaptation rather than the book.

This is not to say that elements of social rebellion don't exist in Kesey's book, but rather that this is not all it is about, something Urbinati seems to keep in mind. He refocuses the play so it is told from the perspective of Chief Bromden (played excellently by University junior Sergio Martinez), making it more about he and his fellow inmates' growth as human beings rather than rebellion against an institution.

But while Chief is the story's de facto narrator, it is the character of new inmate Randle Patrick McMurphy that everyone remembers, and without a strong lead in that role the play would probably falter. Junior Alexander Dupre tackles the role with gusto. Occasionally he lays it on a little thick, but before long it becomes apparent that he's going for effect rather than subtlety.

As McMurphy's adversary, junior Emily Peterson as Nurse Ratched is cold and quietly scolding in the way I thought only a veteran elementary school teacher could be. She mixes complete repression and a condescending attitude — not to mention a bit of Mae West voice intonation — so well that her performance is a joy to watch.

Some other performances also shine through, including J. Nick Dickert, who hits all the right notes as the large, red-faced inmate Cheswick, and Marco Davis, who really seems to be enjoying the freedom to overact so much as the inmate Harding.

In fact, most of the inmate roles are overdone for effect, but the reality of mental illness has never been the point of the story. The mental institution is just a stand-in for any institution, and the inmates are a representation of the people trapped within it. In Kesey's hands, this became a wonderful parable for modern society. And even if they are unable to pull it off successfully, the cast and crew here are certainly trying to maintain a grasp on Kesey's original intent.

"One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" will be playing at the Robinson Theatre on Nov. 13, 14, 15, 21 and 22 at 8 p.m. and on Nov. 16 at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$5 for students and \$12 for the general public and can be purchased at the UO Ticket Office in the EMU and at the Robinson Theatre box office.

Contact the senior pulse reporter at ryannyburg@dailyemerald.com.

Very Little Theatre will exhibit variety of costumes in show

The community theater will continue the season with three more plays and a costume extravaganza

By Natasha Chilingierian
Pulse Reporter

The Very Little Theatre, a cozy venue housing one level of 220 intimate seats, is celebrating very big success for its 75th anniversary.

The theater, located at 2350 Hilyard St., completed its three-week showing of the community-oriented play "Our Town" on Oct. 25 and is planning to show three more plays and one musical this season. Very Little Theatre members selected the historical "Lion In Winter," the musical "Cabaret," the comical "Barefoot In the Park" and the theater's first showing of "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof." Nearly 1,600 drama fans hold season tickets for the anniversary season.

Opening Friday is "Dressed for the Part," a fashion extravaganza that will feature Very Little Theatre members, past actors and their friends and families exhibiting costumes from the theater's large costume closet, including garments that date back to the 1920s. The show, which will run Nov. 14 to Nov. 16 and Nov. 21 to Nov. 23, will also include historical commentary about the costumes and the shows where they appeared.

"The show will be nostalgic for the people who see clothing from their time period," Very Little Theatre President Karen Scheeland said. "It will be intriguing for the others, who might think to themselves, 'They wore that?'"

Scheeland said performers will show costumes chronologically through the decades and incorporate music and dance, such as a Charleston dance, to match the 1920s costumes. A bridal

Turn to THEATRE, page 9

Future Music Oregon

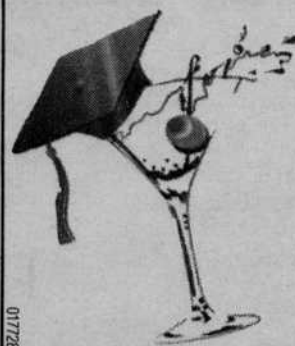
Jeffrey Stolet, director

A concert of experimental electroacoustic music, featuring guest artist and composer Eric Chasalow and music by UO Knight Professor Jeffrey Stolet — including a collaborative work based on eye-tracking research by UO faculty member Anthony Hornof. PLUS: other new works from the FMO studios.

Saturday, Nov. 15 8:00 p.m.
Room 198, UO School of Music

TICKETS: \$5 General Admission, \$3 Students & Senior Citizens; available at the door. Room 198 is wheelchair accessible

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