

ENTERTAINMENT

I love Molly down on the farm

by Jay Brown

There's this couple, see, who've had it with the New York rat race. They get the money to buy an old farmhouse with some acreage free and clear. They're broke. One of them writes a column for the Farm Journal which brings in \$12.50 a month. The guys down at the feedstore love Molly's stories about herself and her family.

Great idea! A TV sitcom about this typical American family. Wrong. The family is composed of Molly, her lover Josie, Baby, a ravenous goat, and Albert, an oversexed rooster.

It is a great idea. The woman who wrote *My Blue Heaven* made her living writing television scripts. The play is very funny and intelligent. As done by the Portland Women's Theatre Company, Jane Chambers would be proud that her talent is allowed to flourish so well.

The play is an oddity; it's like watching two episodes of a situation comedy back to back. Each is a self-contained unit. The two parts are held together by the appearance of the Emcee; a difficult convention in any case and not very successful here.

The Emcee may be a ghost because he is visible during the entire action. He is definitely a spokesman from an earlier time but his commentary seems too benign for the action in the two episodes.

In the first episode Chambers establishes the characters of Molly and Josie. Molly is a

former teacher. She was fired after publishing a book titled "Living the Good Gay Life." She is a frustrated writer. Molly cannot write about her life because she is a lesbian. So she does the next best thing; she writes about Molly and Joe Williams and their life on the farm.

Josie is a former computer technician. She can build anything; "I got As in Physics," she says. Josie's plans for the farm include a windmill she will build. Josie wants to be self-sufficient. She also wants to own a junk shop.

Making her acting debut as Molly, EAnn Hinds performs like a veteran. The part of Molly is not an easy one; she has some very difficult things to deal with and Hinds never lets her down.

Judy Clover is Josie, a tough, vulnerable optimist. Clover swaggers through the role perfectly matching Hinds' Molly.

The other roles in *My Blue Heaven* are male (with the possible exception of Baby, the goat) and are all played by women. Faith McDevitt is the Emcee. Ralph, a visitor in the first part, is played by Debby Lindland. Both McDevitt and Lindland are believable in their roles.

Less than believable is the role of Dr. John (Sara Nichols). Maybe it is in the interpretation. Dr. John is an old friend of Molly's, now a minister. His aggressiveness seems too unreal in this gentle and affectionate comedy.

Probably the most difficult role is that of Baby, but Kelley Edwards transcends her humanness and is a goat.

The Pine Street Theatre is not the best place for an intimate play like *My Blue Heaven*, the room is cavernous and has what seems like a hundred chandeliers distracting from the action. And sometimes the dialogue gets lost in all that space.

The set by Ruth Selid and Pat Ware really looks like an old farmhouse and the actors have little trouble giving the illusion of com-



photo by Jason Lynch

Aaron Wheeler-Kay as Tiny Tim and Ken Colburn as Bob Cratchit in the New Rose Theatre Production of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, December 1-24. Times vary. Matinees also on Saturdays and Sundays. Call 222-2495.



Annie is belting her heart out in Portland Civic Theatre's production with Sunny Sorrels as Daddy Warbucks and Katharine Moir as Annie. Directed by Paul Douroumis. Annie plays Thursday-Saturday at 8 p.m. through January 14. Call 226-2048.

fortableness in the space. One can well imagine what it would look like in a more intimate theatre.

Director Hester Schell, an experienced and well-known actor in Portland, who is directing a full length play for the first time, handles her actors like a pro. It is obvious that she likes Molly and Josie.

The play, funny as it is, contains elements of frustration that could overwhelm were it not for the genuine affection between Molly and Josie. Molly, Josie says, "hates wealth but covets money." But the money she covets, Molly feels, is due her through exercise of her art. Like all artists, Molly must portray what she knows best. Molly must interpret her own experience.

But Molly cannot write about her life because she is a lesbian. Jane Chambers was a lesbian and we know what she must have felt writing scripts for "Search for Tomorrow" by watching and listening to Molly. (E.M. Forster, one of the finest novelists of the 20th Century stopped publishing fiction because of this dilemma.)

Chambers, however, sees humor in Molly's dilemma and devises a way for Molly to use it to her advantage. And through both parts of the play Chambers shows real affection between Molly and Josie.

The Portland Women's Theatre Company is to be commended for presenting this delightful production of *My Blue Heaven*. Be sure and see it; it will be a long, long time before you'll see it where it belongs. On television. Primetime!

Something for the kids

Artists Repertory Theatre proudly presents *Jack and the Beanstalk*. In England the pantomime is a traditional holiday show that adds vaudeville and musical comedy set to a well known fairy tale. Returning from last year's "panto" is Joseph R. Cronin as the Widow Bump and David Beetham-Gomes as her simple-minded sidekick, Seymore Runtz.

Jack and the Beanstalk is directed by David Smith-English who directed the recent production of *My Fair Lady* at the Eastside Performance Center. This is the first time David has brought his theatrical expertise to ART. The cast includes many well-known names in Portland theatre; Diane Olson as Jack and Jillayne Self as Jack's sweetheart, Willamena. Jori Bieze will return as the Sprite. The company also boasts Linda Schneider, Judy Branham, Doug Timms, Cindy Smith-English, Alyson Osborn, Meladee Martin, Amy Fowkes, Bob Lamberson and Brian Jones. Musical direction by Rebecca Adams.

Jack and the Beanstalk runs from December 2 through December 23 at the downtown YMCA, Fridays and Saturdays at 8:00 p.m., and Sundays at 7:00 p.m. Starting December 8, Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. and Wednesdays, December 10, 11, 17 and 18 at 2:00 p.m. and two adult only late shows Fridays, December 16 and 23 at 11:00 p.m. For reservations please call 223-6281.