

Yogurt has an active culture

by Jay Brown

Taking over the Mainstage at Portland Civic Theatre for the first time, Rebecca Adams is directing a production of an American drawing room comedy written in 1926. *The Royal Family*, written by George F. Kaufman and Edna Ferber, is about a family of actors loosely based on the Barrymores.

Rebecca Adams is one of a growing number of women directors in the Portland theatre community; she is also one of the founders of Artists' Repertory Company, Portland's newest theatre company. ART will be celebrating their second anniversary next month with the West Coast premiere of *Angels Fall*, Lanford Wilson's new play.

Speaking about the increase in women directors, Adams said that although professional theatre in New York, San Francisco and even Seattle is male dominated, "there



photo by Rick Adams

are many more women on the regional theatre circuit. Women are making strides in many areas, and in the arts there is much more openness. Smaller communities are less traditional.

High on the list of concerns facing theatre people in Portland is the lack of adequate, reasonably equipped playing spaces in the city. ART is in residence in the YWCA's Wilson Center which was never intended as a

theatre, although many productions there have been able to transcend the difficulties inherent in the space.

Plans for the new Performing Arts Center at the Paramount include a small theatre suitable for productions by all the companies in town. Adams says, "Local theatre will get short shrift at the Performing Arts Center. Local theatre seems to be last on the list of cultural events. One major downtown paper does not even have theatre listings."

"The Performing Arts Center could create a cultural focal point for the city," Adams said. "But you know the difference between Portland and yogurt, don't you? Yogurt has an active culture."

Adams directed the very successful *Awake and Sing* last year at the now moribund Theatre Workshop. She says the loss of the Theatre Workshop playing space has left a gap. "They allowed us to do interesting projects because of the city support. And we miss the intimate nature of the theatre, but Critical Mass may take up the slack."

ART, an off-shoot of Theatre Workshop, is a collective organization. "We like to make

our own choices," Adams said. "We are eclectic in our choices. April is the second anniversary of our not-for-profit organization. Theatres for profit are dinosaurs. Non-profit organizations contain a broad spectrum of community oriented people."

For Portland Civic Theatre, that venerable institution on SW Yamhill, Adams is directing a top-flight cast in an increasingly popular period piece. As *The Royal Family's* matinee idol, Jay Randall Horenstein will be playing the Mainstage for the first time in twenty years. The last time was when he was eight years old.

"I have to learn to play the piano, sing and fence for this show," Horenstein said recently. Commenting on his future plans, Horenstein said he wishes someone would do Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. "I want to play Edmund before I get too old. I've got the old men down."

Others in the cast of *The Royal Family*, opening January 27, are Pat Gratton as Fanny Cavendish, the matriarch; Katharine King as Julie, the premiere leading lady of her day; and Jillayne Self as Julie's rebellious daughter, Gwen.

Rick Jones and Ted Schulz star in "The Blood Knot"

by Eric Pedersen

Two of Portland's finest actors, Ted Schulz and Rick Jones, team up in Athol Fugard's powerful two-man play, "The Blood Knot," running January 20 through February 11 at Chateau L'Bamm, 2235 NW Savier. (Reservations at 228-5544.) The show is being produced by Rick Jones, who produced Fugard's "Sizwe Bansi is Dead" last year, a production which earned critical acclaim.

From South African playwright Fugard's own notes comes the following description of "The Blood Knot":

... the two brothers — Morrie and Zach. Morrie is a light-skinned Coloured who has found out that to ignore the temptations to use his lightness is the easiest way to live. Rather than live with the fear and uncertainty that would have come from 'trying for white,' he has settled for being Coloured. He has some education — can read and write. In contrast, his brother Zach — dark-skinned Coloured, virtually African in appearance. Zach has no education, has made no attempt to acquire any, will never have any. Zach can never be anything other than what he is — a black man. There are no choices for him.

The appearance of Ethel in their lives. Morrie wants to have nothing to do with her. He is frightened of her. Zach wants her but can't have her. It is masochism and revenge that make Zach insist that his brother meet her. Zach could in the beginning, and eventually does, envy Morrie's lightness of his skin.

Their relationship as brothers... Zach is confused. Suspicion and envy. The question

haunting him... why? It was the same mother! Why?

The Blood tie linking them has chained them. They are dead or dying because of it.

The situation of the two brothers (imprisonment in a blood tie) cannot continue after the appearance of Ethel. Too much has surfaced — Zach's envy and hate, Morrie's crippling sense of guilt and responsibility.

A last confrontation.

As the welcome winter sun streamed into the Breadline, Ted Schulz talked about how he spent the year-and-a-half since he last appeared on a Portland stage.

"I left Portland in June of '82, primarily for personal reasons. I didn't want to leave Portland, but I had to go back. I was in bad shape emotionally. Some things were happening in my family, so I went back to New York to deal with them. Back there, two old high school friends and I hit up some of our other friends who are now attorneys and stockbrokers, etc., and ended up raising about \$2500. With that, we rented our own theater space down on Lafayette St. in Soho for a showcase production of three one-acts. We got a little soap opera work out of it."

After some R&R in Fort Myers, Florida, Ted wound up in Ithaca, New York, in the Finger Lake region, where he worked for the summer with some directing interns. During this time he called Portlander Bob Nielsen, just to keep in touch. Nielsen passed along news from Ted to Rick Jones, with whom Nielsen was doing an S.R.O. show at the Civic. Jones knew Schulz well from working together in Storefront's "Short Eyes," and Rick called Ted, offering him the role in "The Blood Knot," a play Jones had been interested in for some time. Schulz read the play that night, and called Jones back the next day to accept his offer.

"I'd been trying to come back to Portland for a while, and when Rick called me, he had a date set and a play set, so I got my ass in gear. If I had gone back to New York with the goal of doing theater, it would have been different. I wasn't ready to go back to New York, career-wise. I really didn't have the survival skills or the desire to hack out a living acting in New York. I wasn't ready with the resumes, the 8 x 10's, the \$5000 in the bank to live off 'til you find work. I do think there are possibilities for

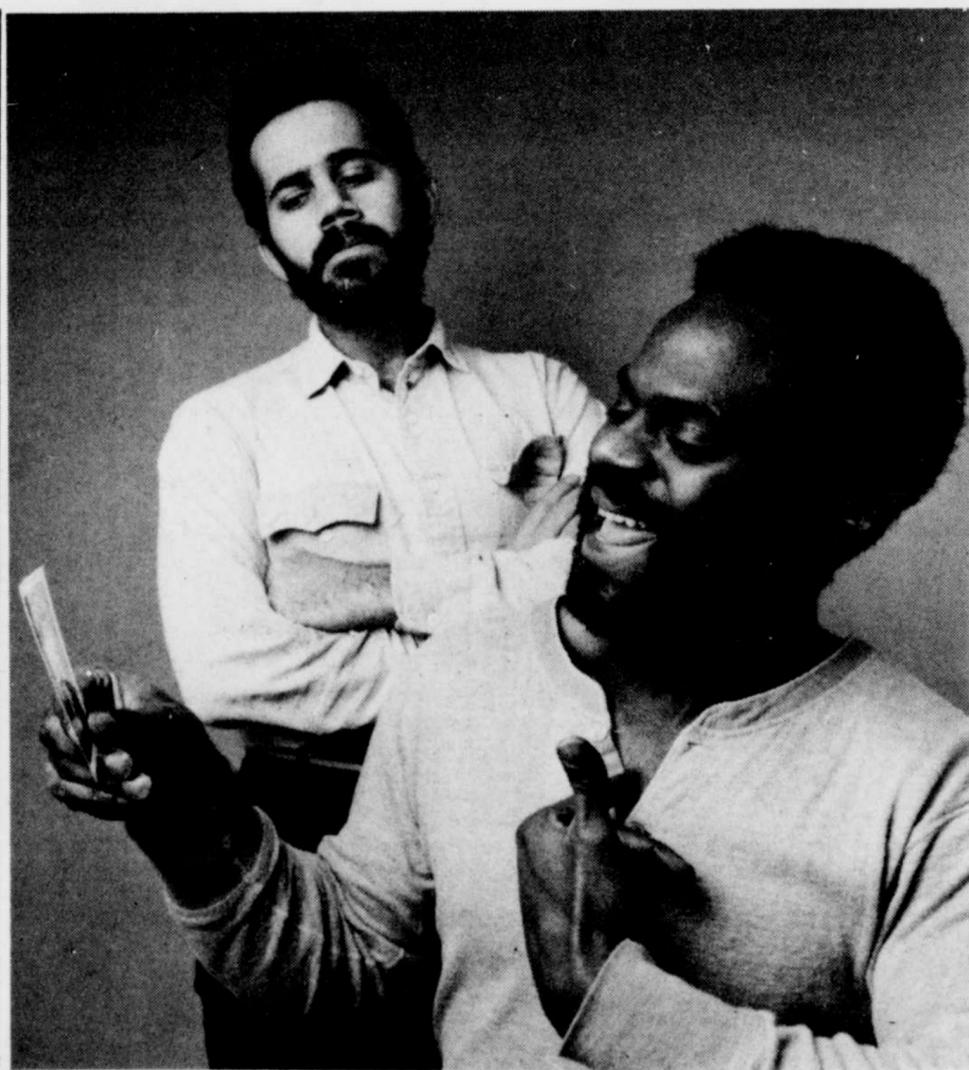


photo by Cosmo

Ted Schulz and Rick Jones appearing in Athol Fugard's *The Blood Knot*.

me there in the future, though.

"There's a large quantity of theater in New York, but on the whole, the quality is not any better than what you can see in Portland. I was really surprised. But in New York, you can go to theater every night. And there are some wonderful things. I saw Pacino in "American Buffalo, Randy and Dennis Quaid in "True West," "Quartermaine's Terms." There is

some fabulous theater going on. A lot of it is good, but it is not a world above what we have in Portland. Not at all.

"I'm really excited to be back in Portland theater. When I left a year-and-a-half ago, theater here was starting to make a great leap forward. It's nice to come back and see people working all over town rather than at one particular theater. We need to work to-