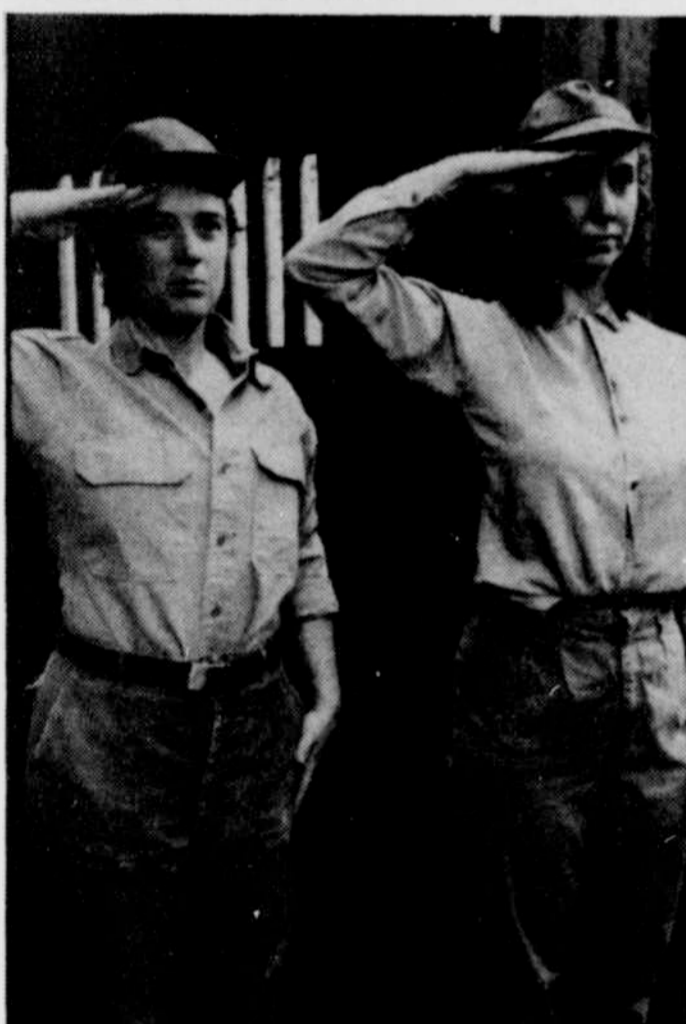


land. *Lone Star* was originally staged by The New Rose during its Midnight Series in Fall 1981 and was later revived at The Storefront Theatre. The New Rose is the presenting original actors under the direction of Alana Beth Lipp.

*Lone Star* has three characters: two brothers, Roy ("voted for Nixon, likes John Wayne movies, and thinks Raquel Welch is a great actress") and his bigger, younger brother, Ray ("slope-shouldered, sloth-like, slooowww. Wears a John Deere hat. Probably sleeps in it"), and their peer Cletis, ("He married the first girl he dated that didn't spit on him").

Roy has recently returned from serving in Viet Nam, only to discover that life in his small Texas town isn't the way he remembered it. He and Ray drink Lone Star beer in the back of Angel's Bar, where they reminiscence and philosophize on subjects ranging from love in the back seat of a 1959 Thunderbird convertible to religion, death, and life.

Gary Brickner-Schulz plays Viet Nam veteran Roy; Ray is played by Alan H. King, and Douglas Mace plays Cletis.



Faith McDevitt (L) and Patty Flynn play Kit and Mary in *Hollandia '45*.

*Lone Star* opens May 24 and will play indefinitely. Thursday through Saturday evening performances are 8:30 p.m., with a Saturday late night performance at 11:00 p.m. All tickets are \$6.

by Erin Rouse

"Alright, let's have check-in," says the director, and in a few representative bodies on a makeshift stage setting, the Portland Women's Theatre Company goes into its first actions for the production of Sarah Dreher's play, *Hollandia '45*, opening May 25 at 3922 N. Williams (formerly the Do Jump space).

Watching the actors loosen up in preparation for rehearsal, I can feel their energy gather momentum. And little by little, like a play unfolding itself to take in the audience, the actors unfold themselves to take in their characters.

Lines are examined and sounded out for just the right emphasis. Phrases tripped on are repeated several times until they roll out smoothly. Silhouette characters begin to fill out with dimension and light as sorrow, love, subsurface anger, and sororal humor emerge in each. I realize then that I am witnessing a metamorphosis common in theatre, and I can barely make out the fine line between actor and character.

What is most apparent during the rehearsal is the unique blending of reckless

abandon and firm discipline. Members of the Portland Women's Theatre Company know it well. Their company has been offering Portland audiences exciting live theatre — written, produced, technically constructed, artistically designed, directed, and performed entirely by women — for four years. *Hollandia '45* is no exception. This offering brings a new challenge to the company and an important play to Portland.

Toward the end of World War II, 5,500 members of the Women's Army Corps served in the South Pacific under a form of internment that included an armed-guard escort to and from work. The official explanation for this measure — and others such as being excluded from recreational activities — was that the women were in danger of "being raped by Negro soldiers." They were issued wool slacks and cotton shirts to wear in the average 100-degree weather, because men's lightweight fatigues were considered "unsightly for women." No pajamas, bras, or sanitary napkins were provided.

The medical loss rate was 30 percent, mostly due to nervousness, exhaustion, and tropical diseases.

For some who survived this little-known patch of history, like the play's principal character, Kit, something about it lingers tenaciously, amorously. But unlike the other characters, she is afforded a choice of dwellings — a choice in time. What she chooses is not possible to lose. Or is it?

Her decision to place greater importance on her memories, her friendships, and her woman lover from *Hollandia* than on her family of strangers taking up the present is challenged by her middle-aged niece, bringing on the threat of another kind of internment.

"I'm very concerned about people not being allowed to live their lives the way they think best, when it doesn't do any harm to anybody," says playwright Sarah Dreher. "But I'm mostly interested in exploring women's emotional lives." She has been doing just that, through her plays and through her acting, for 14 years. Since 1975, Dreher has been a creative member of the Women's Community Theatre (then called the Amherst Feminist Repertory Theatre) in Amherst, Massachusetts. She knows all too well the struggle of the community theatre. "We've been recycling the same \$1,000 for many years," she says. During those years, Dreher has had 11 plays produced and is currently working on her 12th, *Understudy!!*

Although the financial struggle of the community theatre is the same in Portland as it is in Amherst, the reward of creative changes enriches theatre companies and audiences alike. And throughout the rehearsal I am permitted to experience, one such reward comes to life.

*Hollandia '45*, presented by the Portland Women's Theatre Company, directed by Judy Clover, with technical direction by Terra, and featuring Faith McDevitt, Patty Flynn, Sara Packer, Katie Laris, and Carmella Ettinger, will be performed on Friday and Saturday nights from May 25 through June 23. There will be Sunday night performances on June 10 and June 7 as well. Tickets will be available at A Woman's Place Bookstore, Catbird Seat, and at the door. All performances will begin at 8 p.m.

by Donna Cooper

"Carnival and *Changing Matter*" is a show of refined street theatre, and imaginative choreography. Choreographer Robin Lane uses the term "movement theatre" to characterize the combination of trapeze and dance. A troupe of eight dancers and supporting cast of six, allow the show much of the versatility of a larger production without allowing its intimate flavor to diminish.

The only point that the entire cast shares the stage is during *Carnival*; this piece is an enchanting rendition, encompassing clowns, a spook house, mime, and a dancing bear. There is even a cleaning lady to keep the audience from moving too quickly to their seats without taking advantage of the carnival. This piece relies heavily on audience participation, and falls short if the audience is at all reticent to play. The performer's caricatures of the carnival members become almost disturbing as the audience is lured into the spook house and beckoned to "take a chance" by the midway character. The vocals, performed by Izeta Smith and Robin Chilstrom are captivating and well done. The rich harmonies complement the scene, and provide a focus for the audience's attention.

"Carnival" is not dance. Instead, it is street theatre. Like street theatre the audience is distracted and not entirely at ease. The environment created is beautiful, yet bewildering. It seems awkward within the context of "dance."

After the audience is seated, the charming "Bear and Ballerina" take to the stage in a whimsical but uninspiring parody of an aloof ballerina and a friendly but clumsy bear. Like other pieces choreographed by Robin Lane, this one utilizes a trapeze in addition to more conventional dance. The trapeze tends to minimize the effect of the parody, and the end result is a piece particularly suited to children. *Bear and Ballerina* completes the half of the show entitled *Carnival*. It also leaves the audience prepared for the more satisfying choreography and dance of *Changing Matter*.

The transition is made by Robin Lane as her infamous character of Lucy the clown. She tells about a magical piece of clay touched by a bolt of lightning. The three parts of *Changing Matter* detail this clay through the shaping, the firing, and the "Breaking of the Favorite Cup." The images are well



Alan King (L) and Gary Brickner-Schulz in *Lone Star*.

wrought and well performed.

*Clay* evokes the most empathy with poters. During much of the piece one dancer works a large slab of clay, kneading it over and over. The sensual contact improvisation of the dancers complete the image as they move against the wall and each other. *Clay* is unusual because of the amount of time each dancer spends against the far wall of the theatre. The distance between the dancers and the audience is vast and allows the importance of the piece to become muffled. However, *Clay* is a beautiful and powerful work that leaves the audience mesmerized

and eager for the next part of *Changing Matter*.

Lightning is almost startling after the previous pieces. The music is recorded which changes its tone without affecting the quality. The piece is quick paced and unrelenting. The trapeze is the focal point for much of the dancing, and it provides a medium that despite its limitations is entertaining and appropriate to this piece.

The final section of *Changing Matter* is without question the highlight of the show. A humungus cloth mobile provides a beautiful background for a single dancer for much of the piece. Behind the mobile, the shadows of other dancers are visible and important to the significance of the imagery. This section, called "Breaking the Favorite Cup," is based on a poem by Ellen Goldberg; in the context of *Changing Matter* it is the final aspect of the clay. The dancers develop the clay and shape it into the single dancer, the image is completed as the dancers behind the mobile move toward the audience in strong powerful motions that almost seem to bring the audience on stage and let them participate in the dance.

Although at times the dancing and trapeze seem rough around the edges, most of the work is strong and brings a vital image to its audience. *Carnival* and *Changing Matter* rely heavily on the technical expertise of the crew. The lighting and music are as important to the overall effect of the show as the dancing. Cheryl Welch has designed a lighting system that is varied and interesting. The lighting takes on a personality of its own and works with the choreography to illuminate and emphasize the dance.

Most of the music was written and performed by Kiera O'Hara. The music is well done and serves the dance well. The vocal accompaniment by Izeta Smith and Robin Chilstrom is beautiful but does tend to be repetitious.

*Carnival* is a piece that children will enjoy, but *Changing Matter* is more serious and particularly well suited for adults. There is no child care at Echo Theatre, which could be hampering for parents of young children. The performances are wheelchair accessible, although there are no signers for the hearing impaired. Performances run through May 19, begin at 8:00 p.m., and general admission is \$6.00. *Carnival* and *Changing Matter* is a show that is pleasing and well executed. It is a rare opportunity to see women dance in powerful and vital roles, and is an opportunity that shouldn't be missed.