

## Victims and other strangers

by Jay Brown

"We're all victims here," says one of the characters in Kevin Berry's *Eastside Clinic*, a social comedy currently running at the Open Door Theatre. The play unfolds in the waiting-room and examining room at a big city V.D. clinic as eight clients interact with each other and clinic staff and reveal glimpses of several kinds of victimization, sexual and otherwise. And rare is the person who does not feel victimized when the spectre of "the clap" rears its ugly head.

*Eastside Clinic* begins as an almost light-hearted comedy but the action builds to a dramatic climax in the confrontation between two seemingly incompatible lifestyles; in this case, expression and repression of a wide range of sexual activity. The clients include two female prostitutes (Joanna Malandrucolo and Beth Harper), a gay street hustler (Steve Lee), who are well known at the clinic, a young straight man (Steve Dorr), a teenaged mother (Lisa Raven), carrying an infant, a suburban married couple (Cain Warren and Cindy Tennant) and another gay man (Mike Wilson). Also joining the proceedings from time to time are the staff (B'Lou Schaffer, Kathy Bambeck and Howie Bierbaum).

A suburban husband and father, accompanied by his confused, pregnant wife, goes to a V.D. clinic the very same day as does his recently dumped gay lover. Now this does cause some tension in that waiting room. In fact, the tension builds very close to violence.

Amidst the tension created by the husband, playwright Berry cleverly diverts our attention with a poignant episode involving the young mother and her physically abused infant. The very real problem of child abuse almost trivializes the husband's hypocritical denial of his gay lover. Some concerns, Berry says, are more important than others. And when you get right down to it, sexuality is pretty small potatoes, all things considered.

Berry and Director Jerry West have kept



tight rein on what could have been an exploitive and sensational subject; they have infused the characters with a humanness which is touching and affectionate.

West has assembled an uneven cast, ranging from the highly professional to the amateurish. At the top of the scale Joanna Malandrucolo and Beth Harper play the prostitutes, Wanda and Cindy, in excellent form. I was certainly convinced. My only experience with prostitutes was vicarious, via Hollywood; Wanda and Cindy sure fit that stereotype. Malandrucolo and Harper played them with just a hint of broadness, *de rigueur* for "whores with hearts of gold," and

almost run away with the show.

As Kate, the pregnant suburbanite, Cindy Tennant is affecting as her character grows from confusion, to empathy, to enlightenment.

Arthur Harold's set is appropriately oppressive and works well on the small stage; at times it has the effect of a cramped lifeboat—the victims swimming ashore as their names are called.

*Eastside Clinic* continues at the Open Door Theatre at JR's West, 300 NW 10th, playing Thursdays and Fridays at 8 p.m. through September 29.

## Sextet

*Sextet*, Tom Enyart's newest comedy, makes its world premiere to open the new Sumus Theatre Ensemble space at 1313 West Burnside in Portland on August 4th. *Sextet* stars Pat Gration and Mary Jane Granum as two life-long friends both vying for the affections of their two high school beaux (played by Charles Bernard and Paul Bender) who are in town for a reunion after a lapse of forty years.

The ladies live together along with the forty year old son of one (Tom Enyart) and the forty year old daughter of the other (Caroline Swanson). Sparks fly as the "life-long friends" cut each other down and eventually involve the "gentlemen callers" in paternity suits.

This premiere production of *Sextet* is made possible by a major grant from the Metropolitan Arts Commission.

Tickets are available exclusively through TicketLink at 227-4080 or at the door.

## Dreiflachlichstuck

On August 17, 18 & 24, 25, the Friends of Lorenzo Discreet Theatre will present *Dreiflachlichstuck* (*show me a ditch and I'll dive in it*), an original multi-media play by Gordon Dahlquist and Mark Worthington, at the Echo Theatre (1515 SE 37th, off Hawthorne). Showtime is 8:00, admission \$5.00.

Centered around a lurid tale of fear, desire, and traumatic loss of innocence, *Dreiflachlichstuck* is an abstract mixture of visual and spoken narratives. As these various "versions of the story" overlap and collide with one another, it becomes clear how much of our thoughts are framed, often unconsciously, by outside influences. In this insidious blend of circumstance and plan, the play depicts the struggle between personal ideals and reality.

*Dreiflachlichstuck* is the Friends of Lorenzo Discreet Theatre's premiere production, although its members have been active in the Portland Theatre scene for some time. Most recently, Mr. Dahlquist directed *I was sitting on my patio this guy appeared I thought I was hallucinating* at Storefront Theatre, and *Paolo and Francesca*, an original script, at Northwest Artist's Workshop.

## The Demon Barber of Fleet Street



and \$8.50 for students and seniors. Call 226-3048 for reservations.

*Sweeney Todd* is a gripping, chilling and delightful tale of the murderous exploits of this maniacal barber and his greedy accomplice, Mrs. Lovett, a thoroughly unscrupulous meat pie merchant. Mrs. Lovett's famous meat pies prove to be a convenient and profitable means for the disposal of Todd's unfortunate victims.

Sondheim's and Bond's versions see Todd as the victim, driven to his heinous crimes, when his wife and child are taken

from him by the evil Judge Turpin.

Portland's premier production of *Sweeney Todd* will be directed by Bill Dobson, Managing Director of Summer Repertory Onstage (S.R.O.). An impressive cast, includes Guest Star, Craig Fields, coming from Germany to play the title role. Mr. Fields appeared previously in the S.R.O. production of *A Little Night Music*. Others in the cast are Barbara Irvin as Mrs. Lovett, the industrious vendor of meat pies, Cyndy Ramsey as Todd's daughter, Johanna; Ron Brallier as Anthony, her lover; Michael Berkson as the evil Judge Turpin; Tom Graff as the Judge's aid, Beadle Bamford; Bob Lamberson as Pirelli; Dale Johannes as Tobias; and Susan Payson as The Beggar Woman. Musical Direction is by David Kelly, Set Design by Glenn Gauer and Costumes by Margaret Louise Hetherington.

*Sweeney Todd* opened in New York in 1979 and subsequently won eight Tony

Awards (including Best Musical), 9 Drama Desk Awards and numerous Critics' Circle Awards. Len Cariou and Angela Lansbury originated the roles of Todd and Lovett, each securing several awards and critical acclaim for their work.

Sondheim, known for his music and lyrics to *Company*, *Follies*, *A Little Night Music*, *Pacific Overtures*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *Anyone Can Whistle*, *Sunday in the Park With George* and his lyrics to *West Side Story* and *Gypsy*, was also the recipient of many awards as composer and lyricist, as was Hugh Wheeler, his collaborator on the book.

*Sweeney Todd* is told in the style of a macabre melodrama true to the world of Hogarth and Dickens, with an innovative score that approaches the magnificence of opera. Critics and audiences alike see *Sweeney* as a landmark production in the history of American musical theatre.