

ticularly between battles and intrigue in the second half of the play.

Brecht's version of *Edward II* premiered in Portland late last year by a recently formed dramatic group, the Heart Theatre. The theater's stage, designed by director Mark Worthington, was a fascinating, multi-dimensional, expressionistic construction with four levels, a trap door, and numerous exits and access stairways. With the main stage levels raised up by the wood scaffolding, the audience viewed the play from the horseshoe-shaped, terra cotta-faced balcony.

The cast managed to sustain the pace necessary for this energetic, episodic drama. The frequent pronouncements of the presenters were at first somewhat distracting, but as the action of the story warmed up, these interlocations — the seams of the play — became less intrusive. To a certain extent this "warming up" tendency carried through to the acting performances of the cast in general; the characters and action in the beginning of the play were adequately rendered, but only later, in the intensifying heat of the drama were they genuinely moving.

Unfortunately, the Heart Theatre's *Edward II* was limited to a short run and wasn't very widely publicized. As director Mark Worthington pointed out, *Edward II* is very rarely performed; it has only appeared on a major American stage once since Brecht penned his play in 1924. You might keep this fact in mind if you're ever in the vicinity of another production of *Edward II*, especially if you had the misfortune of missing this last very worthwhile performance by the Heart Theatre.

Survival by many other names . . .

by Eleanor Malin

Fighting for survival on a hostile planet with limited and dwindling technology at their disposal, Louis Gossett, Jr. and Dennis Quaid star in *Enemy Mine*. Gossett plays an alien of the reptile genus shot down on a planet too gruesome for words by Quaid, who crash

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lands there shortly after. Enemies at first, the two team up to survive deadly animal, mineral and atmospheric hazards. As the two become friends, Quaid comes to realize the alien is superior to him philosophically (no big surprise), that earthlings started the war (we always do), and that the alien is even superior physically (can reproduce all on his own). By the end of the film, Quaid has figured out that the aliens are OK beings, even though they are ugly. I figure this is a step in the right direction. One small step for mankind . . . one giant step for the ugly.

Quaid is perfectly cast. He's so pretty everyone looks ugly next to him. All kidding aside, he was very good in his role. Lou Gossett, Jr. was excellent as the alien, and will surely get some awards for a difficult job skillfully executed. The story's pretty good, too.

Whoopi Goldberg has been getting well-deserved kudos for her performance in *The Color Purple*, which reads almost like the longest joke, ever. The film opens prettily, with the heroine, Celie, a young girl in a field of flowers, playing patty-cake with her younger sister. But Celie learns many things early. You can be raped, impregnated, give birth, and have the babies taken away from you by your transgressor.

This training gotten out of the way early, (by 14), Celie is married to a man known only to her as "Mister," who mistreats her horribly,

uses her for a domestic slave and a sex thing, and apparently has not one kind word to say to her, for decades. Celie is so oppressed, she seems never to have a happy moment, and we can't figure out why she doesn't run away, or do in her insufferable husband, or do something. She just takes it, and takes it.

The gratuitous slapstick stuck on by director Stephen Spielberg, is supposed to be for comic relief, but let's face it — Shakespeare he ain't.

As to the black men in the story — they were just too bad to be believed. They were either on the make for females who did not want them, or, in the case of the minister, completely unaccepting of his daughter because she was a sexual person. The white people in the story are all shown as being menacingly dangerous or stupidly dangerous. This story, I daresay, could have used a few shades of gray, instead of all this black and white.

But Miss Celie keeps on getting pushed to the bounds of what any person can endure, and makes her way back, into a life that, if not idyllic, yields up some pretty great rewards in the end. Miss Celie finds a little relief from, of all people, her husband's mistress, Shug Avery. Shug awakens passion in Celie; helps Celie find her sense of self and access her strength and creativity. The lesbian bond is so lightly treated that it may be blinked over, by today's standards, but then Spielberg's movies are of a one-size-fits all manufacture, and he manages the brief (and only) love scene tastefully.

I wondered why people were staring at me in the restroom after this movie. When I got to the mirror, I saw it was because my mascara had run every which way. Yes, this movie is a tear-jerker, and it worked really well for me, but then I cry for flute music, ice dancing, and nightly, for the news. And yes, there are flaws in the story and flaws in the filmmaking. And yes, we are being manipulated, as we are by the nightly news, and all media. But — there is some really good dialogue here, and some really lovely acting. And film so pretty you can see how a pathetic being might take heart to live another day, and then another, until finally something good comes of it. And it was good to see the black experience be thought of enough to be portrayed in a major movie. And, it was good to see so many blacks working.

Washed of his brown make-up from *Graystoke*, Christopher Lambert is the protagonist in *Subway*, an existential comedy. He is pursued to the Paris subway system by a man whose safe he has just blown. He has stolen papers which show his pursuer to be a crook. He's wearing a tuxedo and tells everyone he's forming a band. The bad boss man, his minions, and platoons of imbecilic subway policemen pursue him, but he eludes them. He befriends some of the dwellers in this eerie demi-monde; unsystematically goes for the things he seems to want — money, a band, the bad guy's young wife (Isabel Adjani — washed of her brown make-up from *The Deadly Summer*).

Lambert, as Fred, is intelligent, inscrutable, ephemeral. Why doesn't he leave when he can? If he's an American, why can he speak French so well? His accent is superb. He's still doing wonderful eye stuff, and is dazzling in the role of the would-be impresario organizing a band under seriously adverse conditions.

Can Fred sing or not? This, and other questions are left unanswered at the end of the film. This is a very right-brained movie, and one many people seem uncomfortable with. If you go to this movie, try viewing it through the negative spaces. What does he not say? What does he not do? And remember, this world is *southern* — no sun, no moon, no fresh air, junk food, champagne, people arriving and departing, Fred stuck (or not) in hell.

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