

The Arts

Winter theatrics get under way with 'Close Ties'

By Kathy Johnson
Of The Print

"I think it's going to be a really good, hot, solid show," Director Jack Shields said of the new winter term play production, "Close Ties."

Shields describes "Close Ties" as a comic drama which has some very interesting, approaching zany, characters.

"It also has a really strong underlying morality about it regarding what to do with Granny," Shields said. "Josephine is the grandmother who is 84 years old and is slipping mentally. She is now at the point where she is beginning to hurt herself accidentally. The essence of the play is how the family deals with this situation," he explained.

"It is a good play with eight well-defined characters which provides a good exercise for the cast," Shields said. "The cast, in return, is very, very strong."

The play was chosen fall term with the auditions held near the end. This allowed the chosen cast members the opportunity to work on their scripts over Christmas vacation. Rehearsals for the play began on Jan. 4 and will continue until the play opens on March 1.

"Everyone obviously spent a good deal of time on their lines over the holiday," Shields said. "This made our first read-through hopeful and enthusiastic."

The cast will also be performing the play in the Coaster Theater at Cannon Beach in the College's 12th annual Coaster Theater spring vacation production.

"Close Ties" is a family drama written by Elizabeth Diggs. It was first performed in New Haven, Connecticut.

"This is possibly the first time it has been performed in Oregon, possibly even the first time on the west coast," Shields said.

"Close Ties" was Shields' second choice for the winter production, the first one being unavailable at this time. But, as he says, "It's not a bad choice at all. It's going to be just great."

Review 'Impact' boring, 'Gorky' slick adventure fare

By J. Dana Haynes
Of The Print

In the avalanche of films that were unloaded on the unsuspecting populous during the holidays, two of the biggest releases were cops and robbers shows, "Sudden Impact" and "Gorky Park."

Both "Impact" and "Gorky" have cops and both have robbers, but there the similarities end.

"Sudden Impact" is the latest offering of Clint Eastwood's Dirty Harry Callahan. Like its predecessors, "Dirty Harry," "Magnum Force," and "The Enforcer," this movie is a montage of murders, all committed by either scrungy, lice-ridden bad guys or by Dirty Harry and his hand-held cannon.

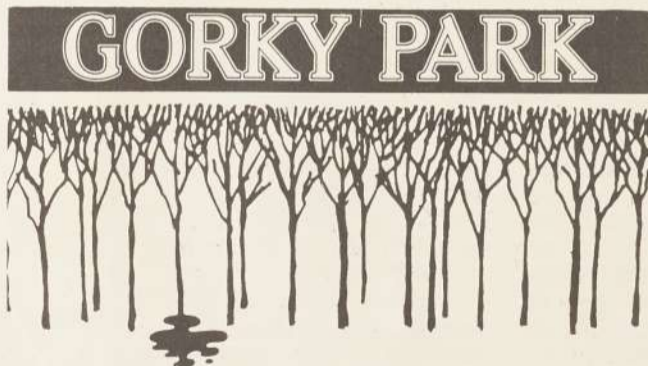
If you don't want good writing, thought provoking dialogue or three dimensional characters, then Dirty Harry is just the hero for you. And, all things considered, there's nothing wrong with that. However, unlike the first three Harry movies, "Impact" commits the cardinal sin of action/adventure films: It's boring.

The first half dozen people Harry kills have nothing whatsoever to do with the plot. Like the opening chase scenes in James Bond flicks, the first few mass murders are mostly decorative.

These deaths aren't even slightly interesting, and in retrospect I can't remember them too well. Eastwood does less acting here than ever before, falling back on two expressions: Scowling and scowling hard. (His reaction to being propositioned is identical to his reaction to being shot at. A Freudian would love to dissect this guy.)

Even Sondra Locke ("Any Which Way But Loose," "Bronco Billy") does little or no acting. She plays a female Dirty Harry picking off the guys who gang-raped her. She doesn't appear to feel remorse, hatred or pity for the culprits she mutilates. She kills them because, well, it's in the script.

One of the only stand-outs in this flick is the chief antagonist played by Paul Drake (not



the Paul Drake). He plays Mick, the utterly psychopathic, utterly sleezy, utterly pure, bona fide, 100 percent mean bad guy. Drake is a stage actor from San Francisco with a string of heavy, serious dramatic roles to his credit. He must have loved playing a graduate of the Jabba the Hutt School of Charm.

I'm not an Eastwood fan (simply because he's a fine actor who insists on doing garbage), but I sort of liked "Dirty Harry" and "The Enforcer." I suppose I didn't think "Impact" would be very good, but I over-estimated it. The best word to describe it, ironically, is "weak."

On the other hand, "Gorky Park" is wonderful. It's the story of a police officer in Moscow played by William Hurt ("Body Heat," "The Big Chill"). Three bodies are found in Gorky Park (roughly analogous to New York's Central Park). The three were shot, and their faces and fingertips were removed. Chief Investigator Arkady Renko is assigned to the case, but almost instantly runs into opposition from the omnipresent KGB.

The rest of the cast includes Lee Marvin as Jack Osborn, a rich American furrier who visits Moscow frequently, Joanna Pacula as Irina, a possible witness/possible suspect, and Brian Dennehy as Kirkwell, the tough New York cop who is prowling around the case.

These four, diverse characters seem swept up in the plot. All four are forced, by the nature of Soviet society, to lie to each other. It's left to Renko and the audience to figure out where the lies end.

Hurt is quickly becoming one of my favorite actors. Filming for "Gorky" began about a month after work on "The Big Chill" ended. In the latter, Hurt played an always-stoned veteran and was truly funny. In "Gorky," he plays Renko, a brilliant military man who's in a no-win situation and sinking fast. He's absolutely believable.

Lee Marvin is also terrific to watch, but then I've always been a fan of his work. Watching him as the rich, ruthless, charismatic American is like watching a python: He's fascinating in his evil. But is he guilty? It's hard to tell until deep into the movie. As a drama about humans in a foreign society, "Gorky Park" works just fine. But as a whodunnit, it's even better.

So if action and adventure are your cup of tea, "Gorky Park" (playing at the Eastgate and Westgate theaters) is the best choice. If you want mindless violence and comic-book action, then you'll probably want to try "Sudden Impact" (at the Southgate and all over Portland), but it may let you down. It's simply not exciting enough.

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