

'The Best Man' opens in top form

Vidal's timely plot adds life to show

By DeAnn Dietrich
Of The Print

For those interested in quality theater, "The Best Man," presented by the Clackamas Community College Theater Department, is the show to see. For those unfamiliar with live theater, this production is an excellent example of how entertaining a play can be.

Directors Jack Shields and David Harvey are to be complimented on a polished and professional production. Considering the actors are not professionals and the budget was a modest one, "The Best Man" is more miraculous than better-than-expected.

Playwright Gore Vidal's satirical and insightful drama of two presidential candidates and their contention for their party's nomination was a timely choice for today's political atmosphere and by no means a coincidence. Without becoming didactic, Vidal's play highlights a behind-the-scenes viewpoint of life on the campaign trail.

Switching between the sets of presidential hopefuls Governor William Russell's (Rolland Grubbe) and Senator Joseph Cantwell's (Robert Ems) suites, the play illustrates each one's abundance or lack of integrity, respectively. Grubbe and Ems gave brilliant performances and built up an

electricity that was almost tangible when their moment of confrontation finally arrived. Grubbe was able to keep his character under control when a tendency would be to get dramatically self-righteous, along with a flawless delivery except for a contagious mistake in a name reference (such is life). Ems exuded a natural machismo that gave one the impression that one had met him before.

Not to be overlooked were the portrayals of Alice Russell played by Dollie Mercedes, a business administration teacher at the College, and Mabel Cantwell played by Connie Connor, a speech instructor at the College. Both actresses had a strong hold of their characters, often difficult because of the various situations in which each role was placed. Connor's one character break almost added (I know it's hard to believe) to the humor of the dialogue to which she appeared to react. Connor's role was especially colorful in her version of a slightly vampish and immature politician's wife who specializes in off-the-cuff insults.

Perhaps the most important and catalytic role in the play was that of former-president Art Hockstader played by Neil Hass. Hockstader is a down-home politician whose support

of one candidate is tantamount to their nomination. Hass gave a perfect performance combined with a superb accent and make-up job to create an appropriately subtle and completely believable character. In keeping with the sense of professionalism, Hass never once took advantage of the many opportunities to overact.

Comic relief was supplied by Roy Osborne, whose role as Senator Carlin, an obnoxious but affable politician, leaves a lasting impression. Equally comical in their roles as straight men were Russell's sidekick Dick Jensen (Patrick Sterling) and Cantwell's Don Blades (J. Dana Haynes). Jensen and Blades serve as foils for each other along with supplementing the roles of their candidates. Both actors did a fine job at maintaining a strong background with their perfect timing and subtle intonations. Haynes had a particularly amusing moment with the press that had the audience in hysterics.

Speaking of the press, there was one point of criticism to be made. Be it too close to home, the press corps simply was not aggressive or obnoxious enough, when in the limelight, to be believable. Enough said.

Artistically, the sets, costumes and sound were great assets to an already

great show. The sets of two Holiday Inn-type hotel rooms were complete with loud prints on the walls and tacky bedside lamps. The costumes by Lynn Meyers, who has already proven her talents in previous College productions, were once again painstakingly fitting. Her perfectionism in finding costumes that are appropriate for the characters is obvious and especially commendable when considering the need to find such "pricey" items as three piece suits at a fixed budget.

The casting precluded the need to make all the actors twenty or thirty years older than reality, allows, yet make up artist Merrill Lynn Taylor did a fine job when called for. I should add also that Taylor deserves credit for a splendid job as Mrs. Gamadge, a leading feminist and a woman you love to hate even if you're a woman.

If this review seems a bit extensive, forgive the need to emphasize the completely worthy and not-to-be missed production available at one's own backyard. I recommend "The Best Man" to everyone and only wish more recognition will come to all involved. "The Best Man" left this reviewer searching for new words of praise.

The show will run June 1 and 2 at 8 p.m. and Sunday, June 3 at 2:30 p.m. Admission is \$3 and \$2 for students.

Mueller journeys abroad through summer program

Clackamas Community student Yvonne Mueller will be leaving June 10 to spend the summer living and working in Lahr, a city in the Black Forest region of southern Germany.

Mueller is participating in a national work-study program that allows qualifying student applicants a chance to live in countries abroad while working in fields of their preference. Jobs and apartments are pre-established by the program coordinators before the students arrive in their foreign country.

While in Lahr, a city that lies on the bank of the Rhine, Mueller will work as a nurse's aide in a hospital that caters to the elderly. Mueller is not a trained nurse but a lack of training is preferred for the field she is entering overseas. Her employers have found that in similar situations when the student has more work experience as an aide, problems arise with conflicts of techni-

ques. Mueller will be sharing an apartment with a native German nurse's aide.

Mueller will work full-time for approximately \$200 a month, not an unusually small

amount for aides-in-training in Germany, "because they see it as part of your education," Mueller explained. She is required to bring \$500 to spend until she receives her first paycheck. Her rent is pre-paid from a portion of the total

\$2,000 cost of the program. Mueller is currently finishing her first year of German at the College but said "understanding is no problem." Mueller's parents are from Germany and all her relatives are still living there.



YVONNE MUELLER

Photo by Joel Miller

Art exhibit scheduled

A student art show will open May 24, in the upstairs lobby of Pauling Gallery with exhibits created by Clackamas Community College students. Selected works will be on display with an option to sell by the students.

Family, friends and members of the community are invited to a reception at 7 p.m. that evening in the Pauling Gallery. For more information, contact the art department at ext. 386.



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