

Play review

Audience becomes jury for courtroom drama

By D. Dietrich
Of The Print

Never one to linger far from the analysis of Western culture, Ayn Rand brings out an underlying conflict of greed versus altruism in "The Night of January 16th," which is currently playing at the Lake Oswego Community Theatre.

A former Broadway success, the play does more than bring up the problem of rational self-interest as opposed to self-sacrifice. With her creative flair, Rand brings home the moral controversy to the audience in this courtroom drama. In her surrealistic murder trial, the jury is composed of audience members who find themselves in charge of directing the end of the drama with either a guilty or non-guilty verdict.

Starring as the epitome of ambition sans morals, Liz Shirley dramatically and effectively covers the role of Karen Andre, who is facing a murder charge for the death of her employer, Bjorn Faulkner. Andre had been the mistress of Faulkner for the past 10 years, including during his engagement and marriage. Faulkner's widow Nancy Faulkner, played by Barbara Garrison, is the perfect foil for Andre's evilness. Garrison gives Nancy a naive'vet' with enough vengeance to keep her human.

As the case unfolds through opposing testimonies, the jury must first decide what kind of a man Faulkner was. Defense Attorney Stevens (Frank Gray) and District Attorney Flint (Randy Disend) uphold their defenses by maintaining a constant volley of eyewitnesses and colorful character witnesses, whose own motives must also be considered in the case.

Both lawyers maintain smooth and flowing examinations, but the nature and the acting in the first scene tends to be dry, much like a real

"Relatively Speaking" a comic treat

Within the first few minutes of watching "Relatively Speaking," one is immediately struck by the witty dialogue and melodramatic flair. Written by British playwright Alan Ayckburn, the script even holds a touch of Shakespearean eloquence.

As the play unfolds, the title becomes increasingly significant to the audience. The "relative" aspect encompasses a spectrum of notions from family ties to double entendres, and more generally to the changing modes of values, relationships, and truths.

Centering around the fresh and intense love affair between Gregg (Corey Brunish) and Ginny (Jane Bennett), the young couple come to a crossroad when he finds another man's slippers under her bed. Gregg's jealous streak touches off a dramatic and eloquent feud. Highlighting the not wholly-accepted sexual revolution, Gregg's romantic inexperience becomes apparent next to Ginny's sexual promiscuity, still a touchy subject in the 1967 setting.

Ginny is in the process of trying to end an affair with a persistent Phillip (Keith Scales), who's 30 years older and married. She leaves for the day to tell Phillip it's over between them while Gregg believes she's spending the day with her parents.

Gregg is anxious to meet Ginny's parents and secretly defies her insistence that her mother

case. As the second act begins the tempo picks up. Increasing conflict and humorous testimony by Milli Hoelscher, who plays a nosy, Swedish cleaning lady, adds much to the play.

When gangster "Guts" Regan steps into the picture, the case falls back to square one and it becomes obvious that Rand had no intention of paving a clear path to justice. Regan holds an unrequited love for Andre, but insists that his presence during the night of the murder was actually because he was helping Faulkner escape the country and impending bankruptcy.

Faulkner's financial ruin sets up a motive for his father-in-law, who has lent the enterprising businessman a large sum of money out of love for his daughter.

Is it true that Faulkner was only interested in the family money when he married his wife, or did he turn over a new leaf and plan to drop his mistress as his widow tearfully insists? Was Regan involved in a crime of passion or just a financial scam? Did Faulkner's father-in-law hate him enough to have him murdered? Was Faulkner simply despondent over his depleting funds and driven to suicide? Rand lets you be the judge.

With the aid of dramatic lighting and a careful adaptation of stage space, the intensity of the drama works well in the end. The second and third acts are exponentially more involving than the first.

"The Night of January 16th" opened Jan. 18 (no comment), and plays at 8 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays at Lake Oswego Community Theatre in the Lakewood Center for the Arts, 368 State St., Lake Oswego. For the first three weeks there will also be performances at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$7.50 for adults, \$6.50 for students and seniors. For reservations call 635-3901.

would not welcome an unexpected lunch guest.

Gregg arrives at an address Ginny had told him was her parent's home. Actually, the home is that of Phillip and his wife Sheila (Hester Schell). Before Ginny arrives on the later bus, Gregg has a chance to meet "her parents" and through mixed meanings and timely absences of particular characters, unknowingly has Phillip thinking that Gregg's his wife's secret lover.

The matters only become more complicated when Ginny finally arrives and to her horror finds Gregg, who's already made himself a lunch guest. Naturally all four dine together, and the charade continues.

Bennett and Brunish act well as the passionate young lovers, but there is a feeling of acting throughout the play. Schell is innately perfect for the role of Sheila and carries a lot of weight with a wonderful subtlety. Scales is also very natural as a selfish man, unable to leave well enough alone. After gaining their momentum the foursome create an occasionally intense and always entertaining production. Scales also doubles as the director.

"Relatively Speaking" will play at 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays through Feb. 9 at Savier Street Theater, 2235 N.W. Savier St. Two benefit performances for Performers and Artists for Nuclear Disarmament, PAND, will be run Jan. 27 and Feb. 3. Tickets are \$6.



Drawings by artist Pat Baird will be on display in the Pauling Center until Jan. 31. An art student, Baird has studied masters such as Michelangelo and DeVinci for ten years. Baird's emphasis is to re-establish the great traditions of Renaissance masters.

Music/culture mixed

"Music Femina," a concert performance by two female composers, will be presented Thursday Jan. 24, from 7 - 10 p.m. at Clackamas Community College.

The concert will feature a flute/guitar duo of Portlanders Kristan Aspen and Janna MacAuslan. The two musicians will perform a selection of women's music gathered from four centuries and will include Baroque, Classical, Romantic and 20th-century arrangements.

The performers do more than play the compositions. They also involve themselves with "placing the (compositions) in their cultural context and providing a glimpse of the composers' lives." Together, the two women create a new kind of classical concert.

The performance is presented by the College's

Focus Programs as part of an approximately twice-yearly coverage on women's culture. The College is currently celebrating its 10th-year anniversary of the Focus Programs.

"This is a festive part of our 10th-year celebration for the Focus Programs," Karen Lever, Community Services and Women's Programs Coordinator said.

Aspen and MacAuslan have been touring colleges and universities across the country with their combination of music and history, which they call "more personal than a concert and livelier than a lecture."

The three-hour program will be held in the Community Center's Small Dining Room and costs \$5. For more information on the concert call 657-8400, ext. 208.

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