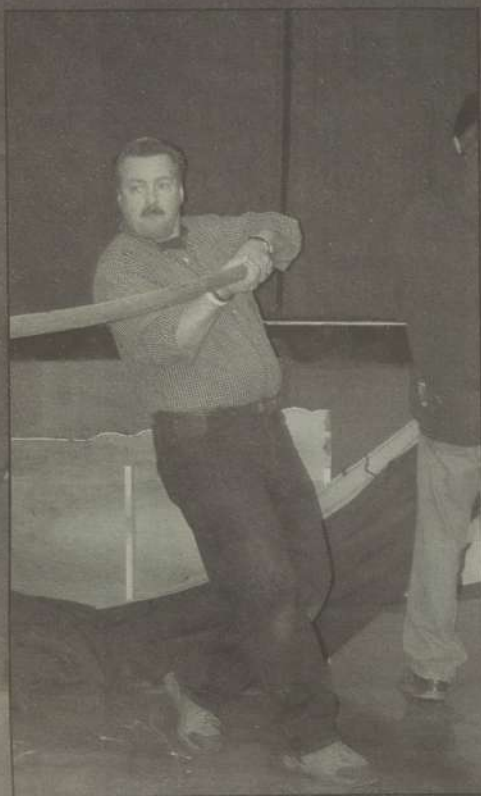


# The show must go on



All photos by Kyle Steele Clackamas Print

*Every term, a small army of students and instructors work on a main-stage play in the hopes that no one will notice their hard work*

## Kyle Steele

Feature Editor

On May 22, the currents will rise in the Niemeyer Center for the theatre department's first showing of William Inge's "Bus Stop."

But before the actors take the stage for the opening performance of any production, they engage in months of preparation. Every detail is explored, from obviously important matters, such as determining the cast list, to factors that most audience members take for granted, like lighting and sound.

The most basic step in this process is the choice regarding the show itself. Theatre Instructor and Director David Smith-English, and Instructor Chris Whitten, select a different production each term.

This year has already seen diverse plays including the contemporary "Reckless" and the musical "Quilters." The last theatrical production of the school year will be the American classic "Bus Stop," written in 1955 by Inge and made famous by the film of the same name starring Marilyn Monroe.

"We want to pick shows that have a contrast so that you can give students and the audience a real variety of experiences within the theater itself," Smith-English said.

During the casting procedure, Smith-English decides who would excel in what role and, meanwhile, best complement the other actors. Casting for "Bus Stop" concluded before the end of winter term, allowing the actors to begin memorizing their lines before the first rehearsal spring term.

"I don't want to typecast people," Smith-English said. "I want to give them a new experience so that they will be playing a character different than what they have played before."

Once spring term commences, the actors meet during class Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. In rehearsal, they develop their characters and establish what will eventually become

the completed product.

But it is important to note that the part of the only class that is working the latest production.

While the actors perfect their performance, Whitten and his Technical Theatre Study toil over the set and props.

In a shop behind the stage, the students spend much of the term turning different pieces of wood into the necessary set elements. Sawdust and a wheeled shop stand are blueprints and a list of what the play will require.

"We're supporting technically what the actors are doing emotionally on stage as they're telling a story, and all of it without the audience realizing we're trying to do that," Whitten said. "If they don't notice that we're here, we've accomplished our task."

Technical Theatre Study also searches for the items that cannot simply be made from wood, which, for "Bus Stop," includes a refrigerator and solid stove. The class will also produce a working sink for the production.

The final touches will be during tech week – the week leading up to the first show. The rehearsal will start that Sunday, with the actors, during a cue practice, the technicians involved in the show.

Monday will see the cast in costume for their first-time performance on the full set.

Up until Thursday, even on weekends, including tech and rehearsal, are required to stay at practice. Having successfully finished rehearsal, for some plays, means working till 10 p.m. in preparation for opening night.

At the end of the first run, the actors will have

anywhere from 80 to 100 hours of rehearsal. Musicals are even more time-consuming, with an average of 130 hours, according to Smith-English.

One of the overlooked parts of a production, though, is the ushers, who have the opportunity to watch the play for free.

"We're always looking for ushers; please call," Smith-English said.

Once the curtain falls for the last time, bringing the final night of "Bus Stop" to a close, the cast and crew will know the end of the audience probably doesn't realize the countless hours that were put into making the performance run smoothly, and truthfully, just the way they want it.

*"We're supporting technically what's happening emotionally on stage as they're telling a story ..."*

Chris Whitten  
Theatre Instructor



TOP: Technical Theatre Study Instructor Chris Whitten bends a metal pipe that will be used to hang curtains.

MIDDLE: Student Noreen Brahim mixes in white paint to produce the desired set color that will be used for the spring term's production of "Bus Stop."

BOTTOM: All set pieces start out in scale-model form, created by Instructor Chris Whitten. Student Ashlynn Larkin puts a finishing coat of paint on a set wall that will be hung in the coming days.