

Medicine Woman

In our midst.

ALCHEMICAL HEALING:
A Guide to Spiritual, Physical, and
Transformational Medicine by Nicki
Scully. Bear and Company, 2003.
Paperback, \$18.

In the 20 years or so I've known Nicki Scully I have watched her move into deeper and deeper areas of spiritual healing, most notably using her knowledge to heal herself after breast cancer tried to cut short her life. I have also seen up-close Nicki's ability to focus her considerable energy to help others overcome personal roadblocks.

At my request, she conducted a sacred pipe ceremony for the missing children of a friend. Her serenity impressed me, and I was moved by her conviction that those of us sit-

ting in the circle, smoking the pipe and sending our prayers to those who were not present, could make a difference. We could encircle the runaways with love, ease their conflict and help them reach out for additional healing. I observed that for the younger siblings in the family the circle and the ceremony provided a safe container in which to express their feelings. Nicki's guidance led us all into a more profound experience of grief and love.

I came to Scully's latest book, *Alchemical Healing*, as someone with little experience and no familiarity with the language used in the practice of healing. The book addresses



this ignorance with easily understood examples and simple instructions. In the chapter titled "Healing Energy Basics," she writes that "energy itself is infused with consciousness, vitalizing the tapestry of life and informing the patterns that connect all things." Further, she says, we can direct that energy for healing, which brings about "a physical effect that you can witness."

To understand how this change happens, she suggests you think of martial arts such as tai chi and qigong. "As the practitioner puts out the call, the energy comes in, focuses and intensifies, often raising the physical temperature of the body of the person, or of the specific place in the body where the energy is being directed," she writes.

Two things I really like about the book: Scully's use of language, which makes com-

plicated ideas accessible, and the sharing of her own experiences that invites me to feel involved in the process.

She spells out the ethics of the work, when she cites the practitioner's personal accountability as being of "fundamental importance." She urges working in harmony and cooperation with other forms of treatment, including Western medicine. She also writes about respecting client's privacy, the responsibility of having the gift of healing and "What to do when it doesn't work," a frank recognition that sometimes it's best to refer the person to another practitioner.

The book is part memoir, part "how to," and part metaphysics. I cannot evaluate whether it will help you learn self-healing, but I think it couldn't hurt. That's because it's written by an experienced healer who regards her work as a gift to be shared and passed on. Come to the reading and book signing at 5:30 pm Oct. 1 at Tsunami Books and meet this vital, energizing teacher for yourself. **EW**

BOOK NOTES 9/25 - 10/30:

Songwriting workshop by **Eileen Hemphill-Haley** and **Debbie Diedrich** at 3:30 pm Sept. 27 at Tsunami Books. \$7. ... Friends of the Eugene Public Library's **magazine sale** (25 cents each) is from 1-5 pm Sept. 28 in EPL's Bascom/Tykeson Room. ... Pulitzer-Prize winning writer **Jeffrey Eugenides** (*Middlesex*) speaks at 7:30 pm Sept. 30 at Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, Portland. (503) 227-2583. ... **Nicki Scully** will read and sign her latest book, *Alchemical Healing*, at 5:30 pm Oct. 1 at Tsunami Books. ... Novelist **Nicole Mones** (*A Cup of Light*) speaks on "Cognitive Work and Conceptual Power" at 6:30 pm Oct. 2 at Baker Downtown Center. \$5 donation non-members Mid-Valley Willamette Writers. ... Poet **Joseph Millar** hosts "The Blue-Collar Special," featuring West Coast poets **George Hitchcock**, **Clemens Stark** and **Stephen Torre** at 7 pm Oct. 3 at Tsunami Books. ... Celebrate **Skipping Stones** magazine's 15th anniversary at a free program and refreshments at 7 pm Oct. 4 in Grace Chapel, First Christian Church. ... Fantasy writer **Nina Kiriki Hoffman** (*A Stir Of Bones*) signs her latest book at 2 pm Oct. 4 at B. Dalton Bookseller, Gateway Mall. ... Poet **Christopher Howell** leads a poetry workshop at 10 am Oct. 11. Contact tonipoet@cmc.net for information, cost. ... Poet **Pimone Triplett** reads from her work at 8 pm Oct. 16 in Knight Library Browsing Room. ... Novelist **David Guterson** (*Our Lady of the Forest*) at 7:30 pm Oct. 16 in Weiden-Kennedy Atrium, Portland. (503) 227-2583. ... **Susan Powter** (*The Politics of Stupid*) speaks about the politics behind America's obesity epidemic at 7 pm Oct. 16 at Barnes and Noble. ... Poets **Hannah Wilson** and **Jane Glazer** read at 7 pm Oct. 18 in Tsunami Books. ... Spoken word artist **Laura E. J. Moran** and writer **Michael Kroetch** read at 7 pm Oct. 21 at Eugene Public Library, Bascom-Tykeson Room. ... Readings by 2003 Oregon Book Awards nominees, TBA, at 7 pm Oct. 23 at Tsunami Books. ... Filmmaker, author **Michael Moore** speaks at 7 pm Oct. 23 in Portland's Memorial Coliseum. PSU (503) 725-8279 or Ticketmaster. ... **Sandra Cisneros** (*Caramelo*) speaks at 7:30 pm Oct. 28 in Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, Portland. (503) 227-2583. ... Fiction writer **Ehud Havazelet** reads at 8 pm Oct. 30 in Knight Library Browsing Room.

performance BY ARIA SELIGMANN

A Man of Peace

Vonnegut play ruminates on war and family, heroes old and new.

Happy Birthday, *Wanda June* is about family and society, war and peace. And it's damn funny, even when you want to kick yourself for laughing at some of the more gruesome lines.

Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s 1970 play, written during the height of the Vietnam War, explores the themes of war, peace, feminism, the sexual revolution, alcoholism, sexual dysfunction, anger, violence and freedom. That's probably not even a complete list, and if you think it sounds too heavy, well, I caught the show at its opening last Friday night while Eugene Celebration-goers were making merry outside — and I couldn't have been more entertained.

Vonnegut uses the construct of one family to explore the entire spectrum of human nature and our penchant for violence. Here's his gist: Penelope Ryan's (Cate Wolfenbarger) husband, adventurer and big-game hunter Harold (Michael P. Watkins) and his buddy, former WWII pilot Colonel Looseleaf (Michael Walker) never came home from a diamond-hunting trip in the jungle eight years ago. The Ryan's apartment, relatively untouched since, is full of artifacts: African masks, Asian vases, stuffed animal heads, skulls.

Despite the decor, Penelope's moved on. Harold's been declared legally dead; she's earned a master's degree, alone raised her now 12-year-old-son, Paul (Miles Schneider), and has two suitors after her: vacuum-cleaner salesman Herb Shuttle (Chris Pinto) and neighbor Dr. Norbert Woodly (Benjamin Newman).

But Harold, like a ghost, has returned to haunt her. Legendary for both his accomplishments and his violent temper, Harold intimidates all who meet him. Yet Vonnegut sets out to prove that Harold's type of heroism is obsolete.

When Harold discovers Penelope is engaged to Nordli, he breaks Nordli's violin, in a fit of jealousy. It's Looseleaf, who dropped the bomb on Nagasaki, who chides him.

"You could have been the manufacturer of

the violin just by not busting it up." I could have been father to all those children in Nagasaki, just by not dropping a bomb on them, Looseleaf muses.

Juxtaposed to angry, resentful Harold, Looseleaf is the transitional man, consumed with guilt over his past actions. It's Nordli, whom Harold makes fun of, who points out the new direction the heroes will take. "The old heroes are going to have to get used to this — the new heroes who want to save the planet. The new hero will be a man of science and peace like me."

The production bears the stamp of the talented Jesse Lally, a local actor and director who did everything for this show except perform onstage: He chose the script; directed it; designed the set, built it, painted it; designed the sound and was on sound duty during the show, and yes, he even served the drinks beforehand and during intermission. (That will end when Jim Roberts and Joe Zingo return from New York, he assures.)

Lally has drawn remarkable performances from a first-rate cast, including Michael P. Watkins as Harold, whose presence fills the theater. A beautiful contrast to Harold is Michael Walker's repentant Looseleaf. Walker is at once funny and pitiful. A line that draws lots of laughs is when he notes that women are wearing short skirts and comments, "I think something happened to sex while we were away." Chris Pinto is delightful as schlemiel vacuum cleaner salesman Herb Shuttle.

The kids truly stand out in this production. Helene Morse is a wonderful Wanda June, a young girl hit by an ice cream truck on her birthday who informs us in heaven, there's always lots of pink cotton candy and ferris wheels for the kids and guns to play with for the soldiers, and everyone plays shuffleboard — "so go ahead and kill; no one cares how they got here." The equally talented Miles Schneider is a believable 12-year-old who misses his dad and is pretty confused by the unfolding events. Both youngsters, veterans of

the ACE Youth Academy, are obviously comfortable in front of a crowd and are savvy performers.

Other fine performances are turned in by Cate Wolfenbarger and Ariel Hatt (Harold's alcoholic dead ex-wife Mildred), but it's Bruce McArthur as former Nazi-beast Von Konigswald who would have stolen the show if the other performances hadn't been as strong. He's hysterical.

Lally's set is a masterpiece. He doesn't skimp at all, and includes a door leading to a hallway and to another door that opens into the neighbor's apartment. The furnishings and props are right on, with obvious attention to detail that is not often seen in community theater.

Lally adds a nice element of incorporating slide projections into the set; however, the placement of the projections — far stage right — is sometimes not in the sightline of the action taking place mostly center stage and stage left, so you have to make an effort to look for them.

It's sad to note how pertinent this play still is. Yet it's funny, insightful and so well done you will enjoy the experience of watching the human race struggle to evolve. I highly recommend it.

Happy Birthday Wanda June runs through Oct. 11 at ACE Annex.

• *Really* switching gears now, here's notice of an up-and-coming show that's simply joyful for you and the kids. Richard Glauber's been the pied-piper, the ringleader, the guitar-playing, accordion-squeezing minstrel of the young and young-at-heart for years now, and his newest concoction will be featured at The Strand's Cozmie Pizza at 5 pm Sunday, Sept. 28. Using improvisation and working with the space, Glauber's show is highly interactive, encouraging — more like demanding — the audience to get up, participate and have as much fun as he's having. Expect to do a little square-dancing, a little singing and a lot of laughing when he fills the space with the joyful noise he creates. My son and I caught his act last Sunday at the Eugene Celebration Kidzone and we were up and dancing, too. This show will delight the little ones. \$5 adults, \$3 kids, includes a slice of pizza. At The Strand, 8th and Charnelton. **EW**