

# Love's Language

WRT opens a lyrical *Moon*.

**W**illamette Repertory Theatre is on a roll. The company, which stages its productions at the Hult's Soreng Theatre, opened its fifth season with a superb though sparsely attended *Driving Miss Daisy* in autumn and is currently showing Eugene O'Neill's *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, which opened last weekend.

The most striking note in this production is the superb casting. WRT Artistic Director Kirk Boyd, who also directs this show, carefully chose Michelle Morain as big, tough Irish farmgirl Josie Hogan, Dennis Robertson as Josie's father, Phil Hogan, and Tony DeBruno as landlord James Tyrone, Jr. Jeff Pierce is double cast as Josie's brother, Mike, and T. Stedman Harder, the rich British neighbor with a pond the Hogan pigs are fond of frequenting.

The action takes place on a Connecticut farm in 1923. Mike Hogan leaves the farm, leaving Josie and Phil to fend for themselves. The two are dirt poor, scraping by. Word comes that landlord Tyrone is going to sell the farm to Harder, and Phil must find a way to hold onto it. He hopes Josie can use her ample charms (big breasts) to seduce Tyrone, possibly marry him, and they'll be OK.

Tyrone's attracted to her, alright, telling Josie he likes tall, strong, voluptuous women. But he drowns himself in alcohol, and when drunk, becomes dangerous.

That doesn't stop Josie from flexing her strong, co-dependent muscles.

"Maybe my love could still save you if you could want it enough," Josie tells him, believing James can't love her because she doesn't look like all the "tarts" — the actresses and dancers — he usually sleeps with.

But what James wants from Josie is something different. He doesn't want sex; he wants to be mothered.

Boyd calls the play a tragedy because two people who finally find in each other their ideal mates; who fall in love and even manage to admit that love, even after all they've been through, cannot be together, because James is too wounded by the grief he cannot let go.

It's a bunch of blathering about love. But it's so damned poetic, and the elocution so exact, the dialects so right on, the acting so pro-

fessional, you'll sit there completely absorbed for a half hour before you realize hardly any action has taken place on stage but the slow passage of a late summer day, filled up by pleasant, witty banter.

When day turns to night, the conversation also turns dark. James' (DeBruno) monologue on why he is the way he is simply mesmerizes.

Lighting designer Michael A. Peterson adds beautiful hues to Boyd's interpretation of O'Neill's work, moving from morning to late night to dawn with artistic grace. Composer Todd Barton has written a score for this work that moves from eerie to enchanting, letting the audience know that something will change, be it grand or subtle. The simple set by Troy Hemmerling works well with the confines of the Soreng stage, and serves as an appropriate backdrop to the simple, timeless story.

*A Moon for the Misbegotten* continues through Feb. 15. **CW**

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Tony DeBruno as James Tyrone, Jr. and Michelle Morain as Josie Hogan.

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