

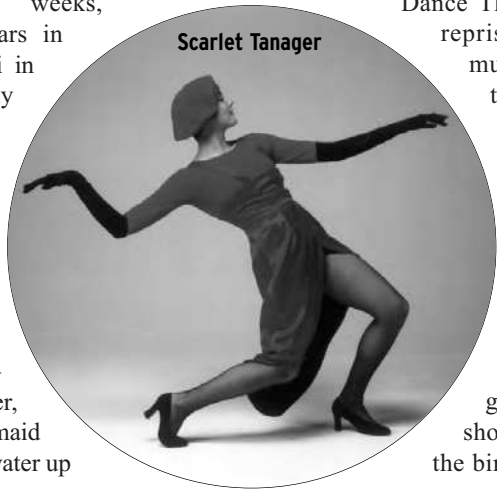
If the Shoe Fits

DTO and Eudora Welty's magic parrot

Imagine a series of sultry days evolving into weeks, months and years in Jackson, Mississippi in the 1950s and early '60s. Celebrated writer Eudora Welty cares for her ailing mother and brother, attending to them and slowing, but not abandoning, her craft. Picture Welty — photographer, writer, and erstwhile nursemaid — bringing sips of water up steep stairways. As she tends to her family, in her imagination Welty develops the one piece she will produce during those eight years of caregiving: *The Shoe Bird*, 1964.

This fanciful delight was written after Welty received accolades for her literary contributions but before she railed in print against the assassination of civil rights worker Medger Evers. Perhaps the brief novel written for children alleviated Welty's day-to-day worries, as she reached into a magical world where a parrot helps other birds try on shoes.

Whimsical and inventive, *The Shoe Bird* is a classic, and



THE SHOE BIRD
by Dance Theatre of Oregon,
at 7:30 pm Nov. 19; 2:30 and
7:30 pm on Nov. 20, Soreng
Theatre, Hult Center.

both children and adults can enjoy Dance Theatre of Oregon's reprise of their 1998 musical theater adaptation of Welty's tale. With 22 cast members, DTO's *The Shoe Bird* introduces audiences of all ages to Arturo the Parrot, a sprightly character who investigates whether or not shoes really are "for the birds."

First adapted into a ballet in 1968, the dance work premiered in Jackson, Miss., with Ms. Welty an ardent fan. DTO's Pamela Lehan-Siegel was that production's original Nightingale. With Southern ties to the Welty estate, which granted the rights to stage the book to Ms. Lehan-Siegel, the current production features original music, theater and dance.

Considering the fortitude of a company such as DTO, one might look to the words of a noted Southern pragmatist, Welty herself, who said: "Never think you've seen the last of anything." **EW**



Ken Babbs

A Squawk from the '60s

A Prankster tradition continues.

The Squawk isn't about the war, or being a hippie or anything. The squawk is just a squawk. You can squawk whatever you want. A squawk is a good thing, it's a positive thing to do that people can get behind. It's a Prankster tradition. We're trying to squawk the American squawk."

That's how Ken Babbs, co-hort of Ken Kesey and an original Merry Prankster, explains the upcoming Squawk at Tsunami Bookstore Saturday, Nov. 20 (\$1). The event will feature Babbs, Izzy Whetstine, Merry Pranksters, and a host of others from the wild '60s.

"We've done this before, so we know what we're doing. We're like a sand-lot basketball team that plays in the mud. We come up with the chants, the cheers, the baskets at the last second, with musicians playing right along with us, dropping the ball with the clarinets."

The performance art event kicks off at 7:30 pm with Izzy reciting the poem *Howl* by Allen Ginsberg, backed by a jazz trio. As he says, "a good jazz group makes all the difference." Following that, Babbs will read excerpts from his latest novel *Who Shot the*

Water Buffalo? which chronicles his experiences as a chopper pilot in the early days of the Vietnam War. He sees plenty of parallels between that war and the present one, claiming "that was a bogus war, and this one is, too." The performance ends with a group Squawk about the Vietnam War.

Babbs mentions that he sees the youth of today as involved, or even more involved, than they were in the '60s. His fame from that era is still apparent. He thinks it's "amazing how many kids are aware of the hippies and the Pranksters, because of the book *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. The book's still being reprinted every year. We've been finding a whole new generation. We've been finding a whole new generation for 40 years now.

"Over the past 35 years people have been asking about the movie we were making when we were on the bus trip. Tom Wolfe mentioned it in his book. We did finally get a couple of the videos done. The bus was set up for 16mm film and then video. We hope to record the Squawk, and we hope a lot of people will show up. It's something that's never been done before. It's something new and different." **EW**

Gettin' Crazy with Aristophanes

Greek theater meets musical in *Good Morning Athens*.

Cross politics with wacky, musical theater and Greek plays and you get *Good Morning Athens*. It's not a play for everyone. If you lack a sense of humor, don't bother. If you're a Bush supporter, you might be offended. If jokes and parody with blatant sexual innuendo ruffle your feathers, skip this one.

For everyone else, *Good Morning Athens*, showing for just one more weekend, is an impressive production full of wit and verve.

Writer Sean Keogh wrote the script and score while he was an undergrad at the University of Wyoming and the production at UO is only the second time the play has been performed. Director Jack Watson first saw it at a drama conference where the play was so well received the University of Wyoming cast went on to perform it at the Kennedy Center.

Friday and Saturday night those original cast members were in the audience singing along and shouting out lines, which only added to the raucous and fun atmosphere that filled the theater.

Keogh was inspired by Aristophanes' anti-war play *Lysistrata* when he wrote *Good Morning Athens*, which takes its name from a TV show hosted by characters Medea (Marissa Neitling) and Aristophanes (Steve Clay) who chronicle the events of the play in a show within the show. The basic plot is that the women of Athens decide to withhold sex from the men as a way of protesting the Peloponnesian Wars.

The play is very time specific. The lead male, Gen. Tantalos, is a parody of George W. Bush and actor Joe Oyala makes the most of it. That's where things start to get really funny. He blinks excessively. He uses words that don't exist. He even has lines taken from the recent debates and election such as "I approve this message," that Watson and his crew added to the script with Keogh's blessing.

Other gems include the reference to the Enola Gay (the plane that dropped the bomb on Hiroshima), "You're either with us or against us," Gen. Tantalos giving the peace sign

with both hands to the audience, and so much more.

The choreography for the two dances by the conscripted group of soldiers that follow Gen. Tantalos everywhere he goes are absolutely brilliant. They step lively like a chorus line, they prance, they fawn. It's fabulous.

The costumes are a bit strange and do little to enhance the plot line. Cassandra (Margie Kment), a fortune teller/seer in the original play is portrayed as a bride and is swimming in the ruffles and pleats of her dress. Lysistrata (Sarah Griner), or Liz as she's called, the lead female role and also Gen.

Tantalos' wife, manages to overcome her bad wig with great acting and an impressive, lusty, full-throated voice that carries the show.

"This play is written for a younger audience but in performance, it has had a very broad appeal," Watson said.

When Keogh saw the performance last weekend he sent Watson an excited e-mail at 3 am telling him all the ideas he'd gotten from the performance and about his plans to update the script. You see, this play hasn't officially been published yet.

So get out there and be one of the first to see the show that may very well come to define the absolute craziness of politics in 2004. **EW**

GOOD MORNING ATHENS
Nov. 19 & 20, 8 pm
Robinson Theatre
\$14 general admission,
\$11 seniors, \$6 UO Students