

VLT

— 76th SEASON —

The Very Little Theatre
presents

Death of a Salesman

The Pulitzer Prize-winning drama
by Arthur Miller

Directed by Stephen Speidel

January 14-16*, 20-23*

27-30*, Feb. 4-5 *Sunday
Matinees

Tickets: \$12

(\$10 on Thursdays)

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Grift for Vino

The dance of sales go on.

Gray, soggy day, I'm glad to see it. Been too warm, too dry. This ain't California, don't want it to be or become. Scares me when winter never comes, when rhodies bloom too early. Climate change has made the world too weird — freak storms, drought where there should be monsoons, floods where river beds usually run arid arroyos, melting icecaps, freezing orange groves. I yearn for days of deep-soaking rains and roiling, muddy rivers.

Leonard Cohen tunes me up with gravel voice "Tower of Song": "My friends are gone/ My hair is gray/ I ache in the places where I used to play/ And I'm crazy for love/ But I'm not comin' on/Just payin' my rent ev'ryday/ In the Tower of Song." Everybody's just payin' their rent, and gotta get paid first, even in wineworld.

ily farms and passions for fruit; and many of the wines are made by formula, stamped out like canned tuna for focus group tastes.

For example, one huge producer of Australian wines might online his blends from South Seattle, never leave home, move a zillion cases of cheap schlock. And rafts of guck make biz hard for mom-and-pop ops whose wines have distinctive style and some honest tang of places where grapes were grown. Ah, well, we gripe, just the way of the world.

But if I'm gonna grift for vino, I'm goin' heart first, then home. Lucky, we scored on this month's sleuthing, some simple beauties suitable for love feasts in the month of love.

Reyneke 2001 Reserve: This lovely hails from the Stellenbosch region of South Africa, from folks who farm grapes with high regard for the land and also for the native people; they have joined with others to support pro-



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giants like Seagrams or LVM, lightyears
from family farms and passions for fruit.*

Sadly, wine is a grift, a hustle, like any other — used cars, RVs, soybeans, oil, politics, war. In the winebiz, as in all biz, the order of march is sales, moving product, brand identity, the daily jazz of putting juice in shopping carts. And that's OK. I like business, the hard-driving beat of production to meet needs and desires. I even like sales, essential jive that hooks up producer to consumer.

When I was a kid in Rabat, Morocco, my mom used to lease me out to American and French wives for a day's shopping in the medina, the Arab open marketplace in the old part of the city. My job was not only to translate between three languages, but to play the game with the vendors: Guy quotes a price for a beautifully crafted leather purse, I come back at less than half his number, he goes into apologetic lament about his family's needs, I scoff and drop the price even further, he screams robbery We danced this dance, sang our lyrics of that ancient song, 'til all left happy. I felt the love; so did the vendors, thought the towhead 10-year-old kid might have the potential to grow up civilized. Instead, I returned to the U.S., where the game is still adolescent-crude, hard-edged with lies and lust.

But I still do my part in wine sales. My work is to suss out good wines, values reachable by most EW readers, fronting for simple pleasures.

But I do this for love, which is where wine really begins. Which brings us to Valentine's Day, also supposed to be about love, even though too often expressions of our love come with price tags still dangling — and checked carefully.

Lotta wines these days are corporate, labels just shelf facings for megabiz giants like Seagrams or LVM, lightyears from fam-

grams that'll create winebiz for black Africans. So not only have they conscience for land and folk, their wine is delish, a rich, dark blend, mainly shiraz (syrah) with a mellowing dash of merlot and a pinch of cabernet sauvignon, resulting in complex flavors of black fruits, cherries, spice and pepper.

Abacela Vineyards and Winery in Roseburg is coming on strong as its vines reach early adolescence. These folks bring passion into their growing and their wine-making, and **Abacela 2001 Vintner's Blend** (\$16) is a distinctly made wine, using 14 varieties to create a rich, medium-bodied red, juicy with flavors of red and black fruit and a snappy tingle of pepper. I like all their wines, especially their tempranillo, but I think their blend has potential to become a defined style if they can achieve consistency over years. For now, this works just fine.

Really, nothing says love like a fine sparkling wine. Even takes love to make; decent sparklers are expensive every step of the way, including winemaking, bottle, cork, cage and label. To produce a fine example and sell it at accessible prices is just a little short of self-sacrifice. Lately, Argyle Winery in Dundee has seen their brut move to join the top of every winemag's list of America's best sparklers. **Argyle 1998 Brut Willamette Valley** (\$15) is flat-out off the hook in this price range; a blend of 85 percent chardonnay/ 15 percent pinot noir, the wine is bright and crisp, with fine bubbles, but the dash of pinot lends a yummy roundness to the flavor. Goes with virtually any food, but do not over-chill; around 50 degrees would be about right.

Thazit, all the hustle I've got in me in this cold world. And it comes to you free and straight from Eros. Now, please, send some lovely rain. **EW**

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In this four week class we will explore the characteristics of dominant grape varieties and learn to distinguish between them, study the importance of climate and soil and their impact on wine, discuss the effects of winemaking styles and techniques, explore fundamentals of wine and food pairing, and generally just plain have a lot of fun. \$95. Next class February 23, March 2, 9 & 16 2005 - Wednesday evenings 7:30 to 9 pm.

Join us for a very
special wine dinner.

Sundance Wine Cellars and Adam's Place Restaurant will collaborate on a special wine dinner featuring the wines of Reichsgraf von Kesselstaat, one of Germany's finest wine producers. This multi-course event is designed especially to accompany several of Kesselstaat's finest wines which will be presented by Annegret Rae Gartner, owner of the estate. Reservations can be made at Sundance Wine Cellars or Adam's Place.

**\$75.00 WEDNESDAY,
FEBRUARY 16, 6 PM**

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