

Bravo!

guide to local performing arts



Nicola Benedetti



Threepenny Opera



Bill Cosby

Dark Relief

Stage lights demolish winter blahs

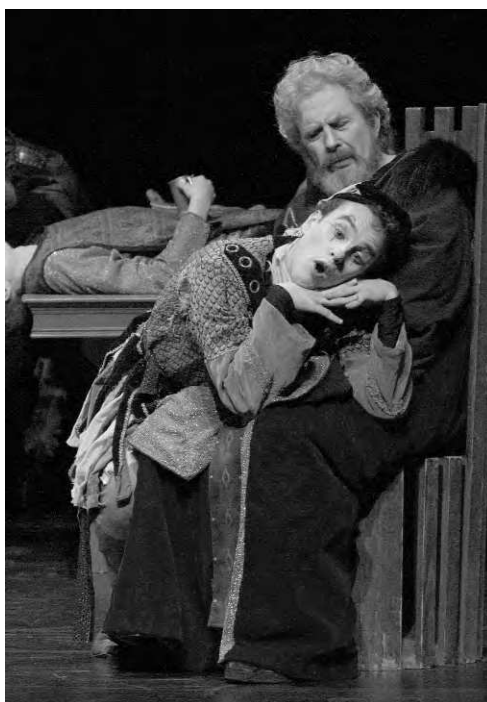
BY SUZI STEFFEN

T rue, this is a time when even the palest-skinned Eugenean gets vitamin-D deprived, when waking up before pink light cracks the sky around 8 am seems like a burden no one should have to bear, when holiday lights linger just to give pedestrians and bikers some beacons on their ways home from work.

But at the Actors Cabaret of Eugene, Willamette Rep, the Lord Leebrick, colleges and universities, warm light spills out around the stage doors. The winter/spring season heats up just in time to sustain us with the promise of weekend treats, both frothy and devastating. A potential bonus comes from the growing crop of local writers' productions.

ACE kicks off the season with a musical version of *R-G* theater critic Dorothy Velasco's *Pigs in Love*, which made its straight play debut at Willamette Rep's 2007 Readings in Rep. That opens Jan. 11 at the ACE Annex, but ACE aces Jim Roberts and Joe Zingo apparently never can have too much to do: *Ring of Fire: The Musical Songs of Johnny Cash* opens a week later on the ACE main stage. I'm pretty sure Zingo and Roberts have something remarkable up their sleeves for *Flight of the Lawnchair Man*, the story of a man flying with the power of 400 helium-balloons, opening in March.

Also opening Jan. 11 is Lord Leebrick's *Memory House*. This play will touch a raw nerve in high school seniors who must get their college apps in ASAP — not to mention parents who can't figure out how to connect rebellious teens with the sweet children they once were. During the play, as the teen works on her essay, the mom bakes a blueberry pie. Mmmm! The play comes off a bit more hopeful than the Leebrick's next show, *The*



LCC production of *King Lear*

Busy World Is Hushed, opening March 14. In the gorgeously layered *Busy World*, three brilliant people wrestle with the clash of different kinds of love, faith and grief.

Speaking of the peculiar family mix of love and grief, Willamette Rep takes on David Auburn's moving (and famous) *Proof*, a tale of mental illness, death, sibling rivalry and recovery, starting Feb. 6. And both the WillRep and the Leebrick collaborate with the UO in its "orphan season." The Rep welcomes a huge cast with Irish playwright John O'Keeffe's 18th-century farce *Wild Oats*, opening April 2, and UO theater department chair John Schmor rewrites the best of the Bard in *Or Not to Be*, a zombie-*Hamlet* combo that opens at the Leebrick May 9. And the Rep closes its season, as usual, with the informal, fascinating Readings in Rep for three days starting May 16.

The UO puts on two smaller productions at the Arena Theatre: *4:48 Psychosis*, a poetic look at madness from the inside, opening Feb. 6; and *Lotus Lessons*, a magical contemporary identity tale, opening May 21.

And at LCC, two shows continue the season that began with the massive *King Lear* and continued with the also gargantuan production of *Threepenny Opera*. Things calm down a bit with Michael Weller's *Buying Time*, a play about the clash of environmentalism and capitalism, ethics and material wealth, in a law firm; that opens Feb. 1 at the Blue Door Theatre. In April, the Student Production Association mounts an original play from an LCC workshop with Johnny Ormsbee's *A Soft Kiss for Samuel*.

If you want to travel over those rainy roads, Cottage Grove's Cottage Theatre features wonderfully goofy humor in *Pink Panther Strikes Again*, opening Feb. 1, and yet another local world premiere (that's three in one Eugene-area season) with Jim Curtiss and David Work's *First Impressions*, opening Feb. 29. *Chicago* opens in April and *Harvey* in June. Corvallis

Community Theatre also presents *Harvey*, opening Feb. 15, and the hopefully awesome *Reefer Madness: The Musical*, opening May 16 (you know Eugeneans are going to this one). OSU continues its season with *All My Sons*, opening Feb. 7, and presents the run-up to the Stonewall Riots with *Street Theatre*, opening March 6, before (count 'em, four!) a world premiere of John Frohnmayer's *Spin* in May.

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