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arts shorts

BY SUZI STEFFEN

Free Marx!

Thanks to a pre-Industrial Revolution job, students and community members will get to see a one-man show about Karl Marx, ultimate Industrial Revolution critic. Seriously, says UO sociology grad student Becky Clausen. Clausen's dad, a farrier, met actor Bob Weick, also a farrier, "on a horse farm." Clausen says her dad "thinks it's a little nuts that I'm studying Karl Marx, but then he met this guy who's playing Karl Marx."

The play is **Karl Marx in Soho**, and its author is famed historian, activist, essayist and playwright Howard Zinn (*A People's History of the United States*). Zinn might not be known for his plays, but he's got three to his credit. The first was *Emma*, a play about anarchist and activist Emma Goldman. In that play, Zinn says, he wanted people to learn about Goldman: "Hardly anyone knows about her ... it's eye-opening and inspiring for them to take a look at her." But Karl Marx? Doesn't everyone know about him and, well, his ideas? "Everybody has heard of him, but there's so much misconception about what Karl Marx stood for," Zinn says. "People think, 'Oh, Marx, he's old stuff, his ideas aren't current, he lost. We won.' They identify Marx with the Soviet Union, but part of the point of the play is to distinguish him from the distortions of his ideas that came in the Soviet Union and other countries."

Clausen, who says she's "using the work of Marx to look at how capitalism impacts nature," does think the play and the work are relevant. As a matter of fact, she's teaching a class called the Development of Sociology, and she's hoping that the play will help her students understand the relevance of Marx. In the play, Marx has traveled to New York at the end of the 20th century because of a bureaucratic error. He addresses his audience directly: "They say capitalism has become more humane since my time. Really? Just a few years ago ... factory owners locked the doors on the women in their chicken factory in North Carolina. Why? To make more profit. There was a fire, and twenty-five workers were trapped, burned to death." Indeed, for those who read Upton Sinclair's 1906 *The Jungle* and Eric Schlosser's 2001 *Fast Food Nation* or who compare Dickensian sweatshops to those of certain athletic shoe companies, well, what has improved?

Zinn says, "[Marx's] critique of capitalism remains relevant. ... If you just look at the headlines, the stories of mergers - fortunes being made and CEOs making 400 times as much as the average worker - that was his description of capitalism."

Clausen drummed up support from the Department of Sociology, the Survival Center, the Cultural Forum and the Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation so that the play, which starts at 7 pm on Tuesday, Feb. 27 in the EMU Ballroom on the UO campus, can be free. Free culture? Knowing history? Marx would, most definitely, approve.



Bob Weick as Marx



PHOTO: DAVID COOPER

Kickoff for the Bard

Yep, it's that time of year again: The **Oregon Shakespeare Festival** kicks off this weekend with four plays: *As You Like It*, directed by J.R. Sullivan, in the Bowmer Theatre, on Friday, Feb. 23; a new adaptation of Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* from Libby Appel, in her last year as the artistic director of the festival, at 1:30 pm Saturday afternoon, also in Bowmer; later that night, Tom Stoppard's *On the Razzle*, directed by OSF fave Laird Williamson; and Sunday's 1:30 pm opening in the New Theatre of David Lindsay-Abaire's *Rabbit Hole*, directed by James Edmondson. The two classics and two sort-of newbies from four heavy-hitting white dude playwrights preface a season with yet more heavy-hitters, one newbie and one fresh musical, *Tracy's Tiger*. We'll be there (as often as possible! Yes!) and send back dispatches. If you get there first and want to comment on the plays, feel free to email us your impressions at performance@eugeneweekly.com