

Monday, February 12, 1990

Lifestyles Editor Mary-Lynne Rice 845-3311

Pulitzer playwright Albee to direct Alley Theater reprisal of his play

By CHIP SOWDEN
Of The Battalion Staff

Playwright Edward Albee, author of the internationally-famed play "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" will direct Houston's Alley Theater presentation of his play Tuesday at 8 p.m. in Rudder Auditorium.

The play is a presentation of the MSC Opera and Performing Arts Society.

College Station is the first stop on the Alley Theater's 23-city national tour that also will continue in Lithuania and Leningrad.

The tour is a part of the Alley's outreach program, which is designed to get more people interested in theater, said Colin Martin, public relations manager for the Alley.

"We want to make the Alley accessible to everyone," Martin said, "(and the outreach program) is wonderful on an international level."

He said the three performances in Lithuania were scheduled by the government there in "a kind of statement of their independence."

No stranger to controversy, the 1962 play was the subject of outrage by many critics when the Pulitzer Prize advisory board didn't choose "Virginia Woolf" for the award, even though the drama jury had recommended it.

In fact, the caustic dialogue and subject matter of the play were so controversial that Mike Nichols' Oscar-winning 1966 screen adaptation carried an X rating.

Although he has since won two

Pulitzer prizes, Albee said he still feels that he won the award for "Virginia Woolf," since qualified judges voted to award it to him.

Albee's play has since become a modern American classic and is performed frequently around the world.

"Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" is the story of the strange relationship between Martha, the frustrated, middle-aged daughter of a college president, and her hus-

"I hate those terms. I don't like to be categorized that way. If anything is at all complex and interesting, you just can't do it."

— Edward Albee,
Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright

band, George, a thwarted history professor at the college.

After a faculty party, George and Martha have an ambitious, newly-hired biology instructor and his wife over for a nightcap.

The ensuing all-night drinking marathon leads to cruel and shocking confrontations among the characters.

The play is about the politics surrounding academia, in which Albee has become involved as distinguished professor of drama at the University of Houston.

Because he dropped out of Trinity College at Hartford in his sophomore year, Albee says, "I find it very amusing that I'm what is referred to

as a distinguished lecturer."

The simplified story line of the play belies its complexity and allusions.

Although Albee describes the play as "very straightforward," the plot tends to contradict viewers' expectations as it unfolds.

In this way, the play draws the audience inside it and commands its full attention.

"There is nothing in 'Virginia Woolf' that a bright audience can't

being drawn into the action, he said.

Since Albee is directing his own play, they Alley Theater's production should come very close to the most accurate rendition possible — the play the author sees and hears in his mind as it is being written, Albee said.

He said the main difference between this production and the other versions of his play is in the balance of humor and seriousness.

In other versions, as in the movie, the element of hilarity largely was missing, he said.

Among Albee's many awards are the Tony, New York Critic's Circle and Outer Circle prizes he won for "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?". He also has won Pulitzer Prizes for "A Delicate Balance" (1966) and "Seascape" (1975).

Charles Gordone, distinguished lecturer in Texas A&M's department of speech communication and theater arts, said, "(Albee) is one of the best playwrights of our time."

"There are some of his plays that will be just as good tomorrow as they were yesterday. And that's the measure of a good playwright," Gordone is also a Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright.

Albee's Alley staging of "Virginia Woolf" will star Carol Mayo Jenkins, (of "Fame"), and Bruce Gray in the roles of Martha and George.

The other two roles will be played by John Ottavino and Cynthia Basham.

For more information, call the Rudder Box Office at 845-1234.

Boring 'Loose Cannons' misses target

By TODD STONE
Of The Battalion Staff

Relying on the overused buddy-cop story and receiving mediocre performances by Gene Hackman and Dan Aykroyd, "Loose Cannons" is simply a predictable and boring movie.

The filmmakers try to scrape together some originality by giving one of the cops a multiple personality disorder. Aykroyd plays the split-personality cop, Ellis Fielding, who turns into characters ranging from

Pee Wee Herman to Dirty Harry. Hackman stars as Mac Stern, the typical and tough "I'll bend the rules if I have to" kind of cop.

The filmmakers promote: "Mac Stern is facing the greatest challenge of his career... his partner." However, they also should include a warning: "The audience will face the greatest challenge of their movie-going careers... staying awake during the movie."

Stern and Fielding are assigned to solve a series of murders, which leads them to a race against German

mercenaries for an old film of sexual exploits starring Adolf Hitler.

The idea may sound interesting, but the Hitler slant is merely a motivational plot device that is barely alluded to throughout the movie.

Fielding is a natural at deductive analysis, but he changes characters any time violence or excitement occurs.

Further, when Fielding freaks out, Aykroyd doesn't make it funny. He just doesn't have the comedic range to play all his personality characters convincingly. Screenwriters

LOOSE CANNONS

Starring Gene Hackman and Dan Aykroyd

Directed by Bob Clark

Rated R

Richard Christian Matheron, Bob Clark and Richard Matheron deserve part of the blame for the lack of one-liners and the blatantly contrived plot direction.

They use the typical Hollywood recipe for cop movies but forgot the spices: two cops become friends, they chase the bad guys and catch them. The result is bland. What the "Loose Cannons" recipe desperately needs is a jalapeño or two of originality.

Director Bob Clark ("Porky's" and "From The Hip") doesn't do anything new with the action sequences, but there isn't anything new in the story to motivate him.

Hackman appears bored during the movie, and one has to wonder why he took this part for any other reason but a paycheck with a lot of zeros. Aykroyd tries hard, but he can't effectively portray all the personalities the script requires of him.

Nancy Travis ("Internal Affairs") presence is wasted as an Israeli secret agent. She should get better opportunities in the future. Dom DeLuise does nothing special as Harry "The Hippo" Gutterman.

Indeed, the entire movie is nothing special. The filmmakers seemed to throw it together to see how much money they could get. Fortunately, the slow death by boredom ends after an hour and a half of screen time.

"Loose Cannons" lacks the originality or the punch that a cop movie needs to be entertaining. It doesn't knock you out, but you still end up asleep.



Police detectives played by Gene Hackman and Dan Aykroyd join forces with an Israeli secret

service agent played by Nancy Travis in "Loose Cannons."

Magazine collector catalogues offbeat specialty publications

RENSSELAER, N.Y. (AP) — Thousands of magazines are piled throughout Michael Gunderloy's home. But don't ask him to pull out a copy of Newsweek or Reader's Digest. They're too conventional.

However, he'll gladly produce American Window Cleaner, a trade journal for those who squeegee for a living.

Or Gunderloy can find his copy of Civilian Defense: News & Opinion, a newsletter put out by those who believe in creating a national defense by training Americans in non-violent non-cooperation with any invader.

There's always Chokehold, a wrestling magazine. Daily Cow is a humor magazine written from the animal's point of view. And Frostbite Falls Far-Flung Flier features the cartoon characters Rocky and Bullwinkle.

"It has happened that the Rensselaer post office has sent me stuff just because it looks flaky and they don't know who else to send it to," says Gunderloy.

Gunderloy collects the magazines for his own journal, Factsheet Five, the bible of the underground, or alternative press. Published five times

a year, Factsheet Five contains reviews of as many of this country's estimated 6,000 self-published magazines as Gunderloy can get his hands on.

Anyone with access to a copier theoretically can become a publisher, and many people do. Gunderloy says the alternative press, once thought the province of 1960s radicals plotting campus takeovers, flourished in the 1980s.

He calls them "zines." That's short for fanzines. But although many publications show slavish devotion to certain rock bands, others cover far different territories in politics and the arts.

Gunderloy has set aside his chemical engineering degree to give his full energies to his marginally profitable newsletter. His wife, a physics professor, helps pay the bills.

He chronicles publications with names like Filth, The Lame Monkey Manifesto, Nuclear Mutinous Dogs and The Occasional Journal of Nothing in Particular with obsessive detail, in print so small it's almost painful to read.

Zines range in size from slick music publications like Maximum Rock

'n' Roll and Flip Side, with 15,000 circulations, to The Colleen Scene, a newsletter with a circulation of one, put out by a California woman.

"She types it on demand — everyone gets an original copy," Gunderloy says. "It's mostly rambling about what she did that day and what she heard on the radio."

Music zines routinely trumpet bands, such as the heavy-metal favorites Metallica, long before they become popular.

"It has happened that the Rensselaer post office has sent me stuff just because it looks flaky and they don't know who else to send it to."

— Michael Gunderloy,
magazine collector

"There is a lot of talent out there — in some cases waiting to be discovered, and in some cases being discovered," Gunderloy says.

Other zine culture probably will remain underground.

The magazine Ripping Headaches, with interviews with obscure heavy metal rockers Fatal Blessing, Devastation, and Vomit, is not likely

going on in the country. Dozens of new publications provide evidence of an upsurge in environmentalism, he says. The country's conservative drift through the '80s was obvious in several alternative college newspapers.

"I get the latest news from people that might not have made it into The

Love story with a conscience:

'Stanley and Iris' warm, honest

By TODD STONE
Of The Battalion Staff

It's a movie-goer's dream; Jane Fonda and Robert De Niro starring together in a motion picture.

In the film "Stanley and Iris," dreams do come true as Fonda and De Niro bring warmth and depth to the characters of this touching love story.

Fonda stars as Iris, a middle-age widow working at a bakery factory. De Niro plays Stanley, who works at the same factory as a cook.

They meet when Iris' purse is stolen one day. Stanley tries to help, but arrives too late.

A friendship slowly develops between the two, but Stanley is often distant.

He won't sign his name for the return of his repaired shoes, or share the message from his fortune cookie.

When Stanley can't distinguish a bottle of Roloids from the Tylenol Iris asked for, his secret is revealed: Stanley can't read.

Stanley's illiteracy is disturbing. He is intelligent, honest and a hard worker. Yet he can't get anywhere without asking, he doesn't have a driver's license or a bank account, and he can't read a newspaper.

Without the ability to read, Stanley is incomplete and ashamed.

Desperate, he asks Iris to teach him to read, and during the interplay between Stanley and Iris as student and teacher, a romance develops.

Still, Iris must deal with the memory of her husband, and Stanley must gain self-confidence to overcome the difficulties and frustrations of learning how to read.

Fonda and De Niro are engag-

STANLEY AND IRIS

Starring Robert DeNiro and Jane Fonda

Directed by Martin Ritt

Rated PG-13

ing and believable on-screen. De Niro is especially effective as a man dealing with illiteracy.

Iris' motivation to help Stanley isn't clear, but Fonda skillfully and naturally projects the suffering Iris endures as a working mother and widow.

"Stanley and Iris" balances two themes and ties them together nicely.

First, the film deftly projects the societal problem of illiteracy. De Niro's portrayal of an illiterate man is moving. Second, the film is a love story that offers hope without a fairy tale ending, and tenderness without being sappy.

It's fun seeing Fonda and De Niro in a simple movie about two people, instead of in some big production that might overshadow their talents.

Director Martin Ritt is no fool. The movie is about Stanley and Iris, and the audience interest is in Fonda and De Niro; thus, they get all the screen time. With Fonda and De Niro's strong performances, it's a smart move. Still, time sequences are occasionally murky, and the explanations for the characters' actions are sometimes lacking.

Screenwriters Harriet Frank Jr. and Irving Ravetch could have concentrated more on Stanley and Iris' transition between being friends to being lovers, but Fonda and De Niro bring the necessary depth to the relationship. They carry the load and do it with ease.

"Stanley and Iris" is an entertaining love story with a conscience. Don't miss it.

Dr. Demento celebrates 20 years of crazy radio

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Who is that mad-hatted man and what is he doing on the radio?

Let him speak for himself. "Whoohoo, whoohoo, whoohoo, wind up your ears, dementies and dementoids! It's time for the Dr. Demento Show with mad music and craaaaaaazy comedy from out of the archives and off the wall!"

Toot toot goes his toy horn, and Dr. Demento — a.k.a. Barrett E. "Barry" Hansen — is off to a nuthead start.

The Dr. Demento Show, heard from Alabama to Antarctica, is the only major radio outpost for wacko recordings ranging from "The Purple People Eater" to rap-scratching takeoffs on "Star Trek."

Every week, the show is on 193 commercial radio stations through the Westwood One Radio Networks, and on 35 college stations and about 500 Armed Forces Network stations on ships or bases.

Hansen — whose trademark is a tux and top hat — is celebrating 20 years on commercial radio.

Hansen isn't really a doctor, but if anyone were handing out Ph.D.'s in Music of All Persuasions, he would be first in line.

His knowledge of music spans the blues, folk, classical, rock and novelty tunes. He occasionally helps Casem choose old songs for "Casey's Top 40," introduced Weird Al Yankovic to the world and influences other radio personalities.

"I think he's great, I love him. He's been a fan for years," said Sgt. Shannon, vice president and program director at both Westwood One and Los Angeles' Pirate Radio (KQLZ).

Hansen grew up in Minneapolis where even at age 4 he could play the fragile 78 rpm records by himself on the family's gramophone.

His father, an arts aficionado, brought home some Spike Jones records, including "Cocktails for Two."

The 1945 recording starts with a man crooning about an "exquisite rendezvous," but goes crazy with loud crashes, guns going off and people screaming "Whoopie!"

"It planted the seed in my little brain which 25 years later became the 'Dr. Demento Show,'" Hansen said.

Hansen got his start in radio at Reed's station, KRRC. After graduating in 1963, he took off for the "smogberry trees" of Los Angeles. He worked at a music club, did show stunts as a roadie, produced a couple of records and put together a record for Specialty Records.

Hansen also took a master's degree in Folk Music Studies at the University of California at Los Angeles and wrote record reviews for Rolling Stone.

At a party in 1970, he met the men who worked at KPCC, one of the new FM underground, progressive radio stations that were popping up around the country.

Hansen showed them his record collection — then about 40,000 strong — and was invited to do oldies show.

His first time behind the mike, he played classics by Carl Perkins, Screamin' Jay Hawkins and others and threw in a nutty teen car craze tune, "Transfusion," by Nervus Norvus.

"Somebody said, 'You've got to be demented to play that on the radio,'" Hansen said. The name Dr. Demento stuck.

Hansen moved to Los Angeles in 1971, went into syndication in 1974 and watched radio become more and more rigid in its format.

He switched to Los Angeles KLSX in 1987, where he does a version of his show that's sometimes wilder than the syndicated, pre-recorded program.