

NOV 19/19

# THE YELL



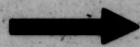
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# AMERICAN COLLEGE THEATRE FESTIVAL

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## special edition

# Judson Earney Wins Ryan Award

by Darla Anderson  
YELL Staff Writer

In true Las Vegas fashion, the awards banquet for the 8th Annual Pacific Circuit Region II American College Theater Festival was held at 2:00 a.m., Sunday, Feb. 22, making it technically an awards breakfast.

Master of Ceremonies Peter Lind Hayes, who is an actor in his own right, entertained the crowd gathered at the Shilo room of the Showboat, with anecdotes about John Barrymore and other famous actors. Then came the presentation of awards.

The single most important award of the morning was the naming of the regional winner of the \$750 Irene Ryan scholarship. Judson Earney won for his role as the son Jamie, in Cal-State Fullerton's production of "A Long Day's Journey Into Night". "I was surprised when they called my name," Earney said. Earney also did a scene from the play "The Homecoming" for the second part of the competition. He will now go to Washington D.C. where he will compete for the \$2,500 national scholarship this April.

First alternate was J.D. Hall from Los Angeles City College. Second alternate was Vaughn Armstrong, also from Los An-

geles City College, and also involved with J.D. Hall in that school's production of "John Brown's Body".

Mr. Hall was also the recipient of the \$100 award given by the Southern California Educational Theater Association which was presented by Mr. Ezra Stone and Ms. Sara Seegar. Tony Cummings from the University of California, Los Angeles also received this award for his performance in "Come Into My Gallery".

Well-known entertainer Sergio Franchi and his wife were on hand to present the Kate Drain Lawson Awards for costume and set design. Connie Bever received the \$100 costume design award for her work in "Canterbury Tales" presented by Northern Arizona University. The \$100 set design award went to Gary A. Mintz and Thomas Walsh for their set in the California Institute of the Art's production of "Mother Jones & Molly Bailey Family Circus". Jim Yarmer of Roi Hondo College and John Sherwood from Loyola Marymount University both received Honorable Mentions.

The Meritorious Achievement Awards, which are regional awards for the technical area of the theater, were also awarded at this time. The recipients of these



awards were judged to be without peer in this region. They were:

Arizona State University - "Tobacco Road"  
Ted Swanick, Stage Manager  
Marvin Field, Makeup

California Institute of the Arts - "Mother Jones & Molly Bailey Family Circus"  
Gary A. Mintz, Lighting Design  
Gary A. Minzt, Scene Design  
Thomas Waish, Scene Design

California State University, Fullerton - "Long Day's Journey Into Night"  
Lisa Palmire, Lighting Design

Los Angeles City College - "John Brown's Body"  
Leslie Bisno, pre-show Musical Director  
Jay Cox, Master Electrician  
Debbie Gallyon, Stage Manager  
Gary Stockdale, Musical Director

Loyola Marmount University - "Whispers in the Wind"  
Robin Williams, Musical Director

Loyola Marymount University - "Stopped Clocks & Broken Strings"  
Walter Kennedy, Choreography  
John Sherwood, Lighting & Set Design

Roi Hondo College - "Pursuit of Happiness"  
Jim Yarmer, Set Design  
John Baxley, Lighting Design  
Bill Korf, Stage Manager & Student Director

University of Nevada, Las Vegas - "Where Has Tommy Flowers Gone?"  
Cheryl L. Crandell, Stage Manager  
Gretchen Spiess, House Manager

Bob Anderson from Amoco Oil Company was also on hand to present the Amoco Award of Excellence. Amoco is the sponsor of the ACTF and presents medallions for work on the national, international, and regional levels. Four gold medallions for outstanding support by individuals

on the regional levels, were presented by Mr. Anderson.

Co-founder of the Southern California Theater Association, Mr. James Butler, as well as *Los Angeles Times* theater critic, Sylvie Drake received two of the awards. Clifford White, professor of speech and drama at Northern Arizona University was also a recipient of a gold medallion. Bill White, professor of Drama at University of Southern California, who has served as the chairman of the ACTF for the last few years, received the fourth medallion.

Finally, awards all presented, the entertainment part of the program came. Now an audience who had come to an evening banquet might have been able to sit through Fran Gahti's presentation of a scene from a play by Chekov. However, for people who had just spent a frantic week watching all types of plays, spent the early part of the evening watching the last production, and generally, were exhausted, the scene did not go over well. At 3:30 in the morning something a little lighter and shorter was needed.

So, as the sun came up over Sunrise Mountain, Las Vegas said good-bye to the American College Theater Festival as the Pacific Region II competition officially came to a close. What remains now is the announcement of the national winners, and it is hoped that the Pacific region will be well represented this year in Washington D.C.

**SPECIAL THANKS TO RICK LARSEN'S CRITICAL REVIEW CLASS FOR ASSISTING IN THIS PRODUCTION. TWENTY-SEVEN STUDENTS ATTENDED THE EIGHTEEN PLAYS, AND THEIR ASSISTANCE IS MOST APPRECIATED.**

## THE YELL

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Don Barry

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## Set Design (The Artist's Touch)

by Mark Hayes  
YELL Staff Writer

What would you do if someone told you that they wanted a house with a removable front, a police station, four yards of dirt and a few other odds and ends, all in a space 40 ft. wide and 95 ft. long?

The average person would probably go bananas just thinking about it, but if you were a set designer it would be just another day's work.

The sets for the American College Theater Festival (ACTF) are designed and built by each individual school. As many students as possible are involved in the design.

The work begins with the designer meeting with the director to get a general idea of what is going to be needed. The designer then usually makes a working model. This model consists of moveable pieces that are painted and placed so as to depict the actual stage.

After the model is completed the designer again meets with the director to decide what changes, if any, need to be made. When everything is perfect the designer makes design drawings. These drawings are given to the technical director who makes the technical drawings (blueprints) which in turn are given to the shop foreman to be used as a guide for building the sets.

This process for the ACTF plays usually takes anywhere from 3 to 4 weeks (8 hrs. a day 5 days a week) and the average cost is around \$800.00.

Each school is allowed 4 hours to set up, using a crew of 10 people. The sets must be struck after each show.

The most elaborate sets used for the ACTF performances were for "Long Days Journey Into Night", which consisted of the interior and exterior of a southern mansion, and "Tobacco Road", for which 4 yards of dirt were trucked in.

I wish to express my thanks to set designer Ellis Pryce-Jones without whose help this article could not have been written.

A Review By George Stamos

## Where Has Tommy Flowers Gone?

### Stars Speak Out

by George Stamos, Jr.  
YELL Associate Editor

An interview with Brian Strom and Maureen Abell, the main characters of UNLV's American College Theatre Festival entry "Where Has Tommy Flowers Gone?", is very similar to putting your head in a washing machine and setting it to the "spin" cycle. I mean that to be a compliment: it is indicative of the highly energetic and creative aspects of these two multi-talented individuals. They both had strong opinions on their roles in "Flowers" and on the creative theatrical experience in general.

Strom, who plays the main character of Tommy Flowers in the production and who has had extensive theatrical experience both in high school and at UNLV talked about "Tommy Flowers" chances in this year's competition. He indicated concern about the mature level of the script, calling it "questionable" and noting that that kind of material "isn't readily accepted", resulting in "limited appeal". He also noted that the uniquely cinematic style of the production, with characters popping in and out with little continuity might turn off more traditionally-oriented judges.

Maureen Abell, who plays the oversexed Bunny Barnum sees the ability of the play to relate to what is happening in America to day as its greatest strength. Strom agrees, stating that the play attacks typical American stereotypes. It also shows, Strom said, how we are becoming increasingly unable to communicate and relate to one another emotionally. Maureen considers her character of Bunny as being essentially tragic, despite the comic overtones, as a result of that character's inability to relate emotionally. She sees as a central line in the play: "I'm into my own theatre, now," spoken by Flowers, as summing up the "do your own thing" philosophy. It is a contemporary rephrasing of Shakespeare's "all the world's a stage," she said. Brian quipped: "My whole life has been tragic. It all started when a perverted babysitter locked me in a closet at the age of 1 1/2." Maureen retorted: "I always knew that I was the odd one in the bunch. But, I think that I have used this to my advantage."

The YELL: "In view of the fact that the student actor is a non-professional, from the financial standpoint, does this allow greater freedom of choice in role selection and portray all? Or do the instructors maintain tight control?"



Strom: Creativity is at the whim of the Director. Only on a college campus, it is at a smaller level. Different directors have different styles, just as different actors have different styles. Hopefully, both will reach a compromise.

Abell: You have to learn the director's differences.

The YELL: From an academic standpoint, are student actors required to involve themselves in other aspects of theatre--such as lighting, set design, costuming, etc.? If so, is this beneficial to the student's comprehension of their roles and how they relate to the overall theatrical production?

Strom: It's the responsibility of the colleges and universities to turn out well-balanced instructors for basically teaching purposes. Generally, the department will discourage you from going into a specific field.

Abell: It's up to the individual. I view acting as a profession. I'm very goal-oriented and I feel that this makes for a more professional atmosphere.

Strom: You're either going to want to be very good at one job or want to be a jack of all trades.

The YELL: Where can the actors and "stars" of tomorrow receive their training and experience? Can college theatre programs provide that training and experience?

Strom: Those training grounds don't really exist anymore. Is there any market for a W.C. Fields and a Chaplin? We're in an interesting cycle, though: Comics such as Woody Allen, Gene Wilder, and Marty Feldman are being signed to contracts allowing them to produce, direct and appear in their own films. We are seeing them as the total creator.



Abell: Look at the majority of the actors today. All of them are well trained. I strongly feel that success for the solo artist means generating a unique image. To do this, you have to work at it with a lot of drive and vitality. You must achieve consistent excellence. Being seen by the right people at the right time is a must. You have to sell yourself. How many actors have the freedom to pick and choose? Getting work is what it is all about. Unless, of course, you want to be a starving actor or actress. We're getting there, though, here at UNLV. But there are very few people who are dead serious about dedicating themselves to the acting profession.



Brian Strom and Arlene Peikoff exchange glances during UNLV's "Tommy Flowers"  
Photo by Office of Information

UNLV's production of Terrence McNally's outrageously funny work played to a very receptive and near-capacity Judy Bayley crowd. It is a spirited script that takes dead aim at many hallowed American institutions. Although the material is slightly dated, the cast is able to retain much of its clout.

The staging of the production was very effective, using a very open set and little scenery. This blended perfectly with the cinematic style of the play. Characters would pop in and out in almost a "stream of consciousness" fashion. The openness of the set design facilitated the almost fluid movement that this type of work required. The set design also incorporated rear-screen projection quite skillfully, without being too pretentious or distracting. The use of risers allowed the players great flexibility. However, there were times when the ability to play on different levels was not fully utilized.

The play's pacing was reasonably consistent, but did lag in several spots. Specifically, the scenes involving the brother of Tommy Flowers went nowhere in terms of movement or execution.

There were times during the production when lines were almost completely lost due to the characters speaking upstage. This was compounded from my vantage point, since very little of the play was staged down left. There was a tendency for the play to be blocked either up center or slightly down right; although a very enjoyable aspect was the fine use of voices originating from the back or sides of the house, thereby expanding the space in which the play was performed.



## Nevada Las Vegas

Brian Strom's performance of the title character was sympathetic and at times powerful. He has a very good sense of where he is on stage and what he is doing. His reacting to situations, especially with the audience, lent a credibility that a lesser performer would not have established. I would take minor issue with his portrayal of the retarded Puerto Rican girl, which was indeed funny but perhaps a bit too slapstick.

Maureen Abell's characterization of the wacky teenage "John Birch" sex maniac was absolutely delightful. She immediately picked the production up where it had been lagging slightly. Her performance was like drinking Hawaiian Punch spiked with nitroglycerin.

I was a bit disappointed with the character of the old man who was perhaps a bit too cliché-ish, but who had his moments. However, his last lines, spoken from the back of the house to simulate his being at Bellview Hospital, did not convey the timbre of an old man only hours away from his death. Rather, he sounded more like it was his opening scene.

Laura Leigh Haig, who played one of Tommy's lovers, gave a sensitive and touching performance. I was totally convinced that she was the mixed-up cellist, Neda Lemon. I was urged to jump on stage and rescue her from the clutches of the slimy Turkish manager of the Howard Johnson's that she and Tommy were kicked out of.

The use of profanity in the script was skillfully handled throughout, especially with regard to Miss Abell's character of Bunny Barnum. In that case, it was a riot. Yet the scene about the brother discussing his relations with his wife I could have done without.

I was quite disappointed in the ending. I do not know whether to blame this on playwright McNally or the way in which it was done; it was too long and melodramatic for me. One does not get zapped with a high powered rifle at close range and still have enough left in you to go stumbling about calling your dog. And yet, this is theatre, so---why not? (By the way, having Tommy Flowers actually shot with red dye was very effective.)

On the whole, the production was handled well and was very enjoyable. So enjoyable, in fact, that I am tempted to send Arnold the Dog (played by Douglas Marney) some Dog Chewies spiked in Johnny Walker Red.

### PRODUCTION STAFF

Production Directed by Robert N. Burgan  
Scenic and Lighting Designer: Edgar W. Swift  
Costume Designer: Ellis M. Pryce-Jones

Technical Director: Edgar W. Swift  
Assistant Lighting Designer: Lou McKeen  
Stage Manager: Cheryl L. Crandall  
House Manager: Gretchen Spiess  
Sound Designer and Operator: William H. Childers

# The Rainmaker

Special to the YELL  
by William R. Seago

Playwright N. Richard Nash's play *The Rainmaker*, first produced on the New York stage in 1954, centers around the efforts of a rancher to get his only daughter married. While his cattle are

dying and his crops are drying up due to a severe drought, H. C. Curry's chief concern is, nonetheless, his daughter's spinsterhood.

The action of the play takes place in the American Midwest of the 1920s over a two-day period.

As the story opens, the daughter, Lizzie, has returned home

from a visit with her aunt and uncle and their four sons. She has failed to make much of an impression on her male cousins, and has resigned herself to the dim prospects of a single life forever.

In addition to Lizzie and her father, there are Lizzie's two brothers: the overly protective Noah, and the dimwitted Jimmy.

While Noah and Lizzie take a realistic, even pessimistic, view of her situation, H. C. and Jimmy indulge in reveries of a "shining knight in white armor" who will eventually come to rescue Lizzie from her fate.

A con man arrives on the scene with the promise of bringing rain to the drought-stricken ranch in exchange for the payment of a hundred dollars. H. C., pushover that he is, agrees to pay. The con man is immediately attracted to Lizzie, who sees him simply for what he is.

With much cajoling, however, he is able to help Lizzie gain the confidence in herself as a woman that she so greatly needs. And at play's end the drought is miraculously ended, though this is merely coincidental. Or is it?

Nash is obviously as opened to dreaming as are Jimmy, H. C., the rainmaker, and eventually Lizzie.

The parallelism between the salvation of Lizzie and the salvation of the land is so blatantly obvious, that even the most unsophisticated viewer of the 50's could clearly see it.

Still, as performed by actors of the Theater Arts Department of Cerritos College, *The Rainmaker*

parts and thus gives the impression of straining.

As played by Chris Cottingham, Jimmy is at times unbelievably simple, and Cottingham stomps around the set a little too hard at times in order to produce the image of a lummock. But considering that Cottingham was brought in from Occidental Col-



A thoughtful moment from Cerritos College's "The Rainmaker"  
Photo by Office of Information



## Cerritos College

lege only hours before the play was to begin, and he had never played the part of Jimmy before, did remarkably well.

Gail Bryson's characterization of Lizzie is good for the most part, but she could use some restraint with her hard gestures. She does well in comic sequences, and is somewhat weaker in dramatic moments.

Robert Parsons' make-up is very good for the part of H. C., complete with snowy white hair and rugged, wrinkled facial features. As soon as Parsons opens his mouth, however, it is so obviously that of a much younger man speaking, that the image of the elderly patriarch is almost completely shattered.

Dan Payne in the role of Noah is suitable. As the rigid older brother, he is supposedly trying to protect Jimmy from the claws of a wanton woman, when, in fact, he is quite jealous. Payne manages to convey this to the audience without being too obvious to the characters around him.

Even without these minor variations, *Rainmaker* provides a diverting evening of escapism affair at the theater.

on along the same interpretational lines and with a little work you'll have a pretty good satire.

# A Long Day's Journey into Night

Special to the YELL  
by James J. Jackson

I personally find Eugene O'Neill's plays to be dreadfully dull and boring. How delightful it was to witness the State University Fullerton's performance during the American College Theater Festival's Pacific South regional competition. Their performance gives new insight into O'Neill's work. And all this time I thought "Long Day's Journey Into Night" was supposed to be a dramatic production: And now I find that it is really a (previously poorly interpreted) satire on popular American "art" forms, in particular, the soap opera. His story of the trials and tribulations of an actor's family, with a morphine addict mother, a miser father, one lazy son, and another son with consumption, should most probably be retitled: "A Long Day's Journey Into The Edge of Night."

Of course, the Fullerton production, being the first to break away from the previous tragic misinterpretation of "Night," was not a perfect play. Due to the length of the play, about three and one half hours, it is difficult to keep promoting laughter for the entire piece. In an unwise decision by the director, much of the melodrama of the now obsolete interpretation of O'Neill

was retained. Some more editing is necessary. The uncountable dialogues between James Tyrone (Kenton J. Benedict) and/or Mary Tyrone (Georgia T. Benedict) and/or Jamie Tyrone (Jack Wellington) and/or Edmund Tyrone (Judson Earney) are yo-yo-like in their sudden transformations from comedy to soap-operalike melodrama.

The effects, though, were a continuous source of enjoyment. The lighting effects were marvelous, from the subtle switching on of about a thousand watts of light to signify the fading away of the fog, to the floodlight quality of

accent, reminiscent of Catherine O'Flaherty, the White House maid who writes the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty in David Frye's comedy album "I Am The President." Ms. Benedict's performance improves as the play progresses, i.e., as Mary starts using morphine. Judson Earney as Edmund turns in an imminently forgettable performance.

The best performance by a major character is undoubtedly Jack Wellington's portrayal of Jamie. Although his lines often force him to stoop to melodrama, his tragicomic portrayal of the lazy shiftless son is at times superb.



## California State, Fullerton

the interior lighting. But, undoubtedly, the best effects were aural. Moving quickly past the surreal telephone ringing and off-stage footsteps, we come to what I feel was the best part of the play...the foghorn, which due to the timing and tonal quality, sounded like a cosmic raspberry from heaven.

The acting, however, was spotty. Kenton Benedict's portrayal of James was much too melodramatic, while Georgia Benedict's Mary was, due to the atrocious

And we finally arrive at the best performance in the play...Susan Bishop as Cathleen, the maid. Although the other characters have occasional spells of farcical acting ability, Ms. Bishop sustains her satirical acting throughout her all too brief appearances, only partly due to the fact that she is the only character with all comic lines.

And now suggestions to the Fullerton actors and crew...Keep



Ken and Georgia Taylor Benedict in a scene from the first act of California State-Fullerton's, "Long Day's Journey Into Night"  
Photo by Office of Information

# Tobacco Road

by Joan Shapiro  
Special to *The YELL*

The Arizona State University Theatre contributed the longest production to the American College Theatre Festival held at the UNLV Judy Bayley Theatre. In the original adaptation from the novel by Erskine Caldwell, *Tobacco Road* was noted to be the second longest non-musical play; however, the Arizona State Theatre Group has managed to elevate it to first. At least it appears that way if the shuffling of feet, the occasional yawns and the lethargic way in which the audience returned to their seats after intermission are acceptable indicators of its tiring length.

Caldwell's portrayal of the backwoods, rural, country folk life in 1931, when originally produced, was a shocking display of a life style which most American theatergoers were only exposed to through a medium such as the theater. This "slice of life" genre necessitates a refined perception on the part of the director in order to bring out the subtle qualities of each of the characters which, in the University of Arizona's presentation, is unfortunately missing.

Although this production has

been entered into the ACTF, which in itself is an indicator of some selectivity, it is noteworthy that none of the performers were among those chosen for consideration of the Irene Ryan Award for outstanding individual performance. This is unfortunate, for some of the performers were worthy of merit. Many of the actors and actresses delivered their lines well, had good projection and high degree of credibility, and were well-received by the audience. It is unfortunate that, perhaps, with a more deft hand by the director, James Yeater, the performances could have been more finely tuned. Some redeeming factors were such interesting features as the "tons" of dirt heaped upon the

the acting ability, which helped overcome the credibility gap found in the total production, and in the monotonous overtones surrounding the actors. However, as in any "gold panning" endeavor, while sifting through the sand a few glimmers of hope appear, especially in the portrayals by the male leads.

Dude Lester, played by talented John Jackson, is the sixteen-year-old son of Jeeter Lester played by Jan Voshefsky, who managed a fairly good performance in spite of some difficulty delivering some of his dialogue. Muffled lines by Voshefsky were somewhat of a distraction. Peter Van Wagner as Lov Bensey, the angered, but lovestruck, bridegroom of Jeeter's daughter,

the performances with little margin for error. The crucial elements of making scenes not only interesting, but innovative, must be passed on to the director. Ada's final lines in the play are directed to her husband to let her daughter Pearl come to her as she lies dying, "Let her go, Jeeter, let her go", is a request also to allow Pearl to get away from the social lot in which she finds herself entrenched. And by allowing her to escape, allows the audience to do so, too.



## Arizona State

set along with other "collectables", in keeping with what one might expect to find in back-country style living. The "dueling banjos" fade in each act, while not terribly innovative, was certainly acceptable in setting the mood. These became the areas of audience attention, rather than

Pearl, who has "run off", delivers his lines with excitement and fervor. He is "on cue", "on time", and sometimes seems like the only realistic character on stage. The women, for the most part, seem a little smaller than life. The female lead, Ada (Kay Colburn) and Grandma Lester



Greg Atkins, Jeff Paul cavert while Ken Freedman attempts to study during Long Beach City College's production of "Moonchildren"  
Photo by Office of Information

# Moonchildren

by George Stamos, Jr.  
YELL Associate Editor

The Long Beach City College production of the Michael Weller comedy "Moonchildren" raises several questions: First of all, why did their theatre department select this particular play; secondly, why did the administrators of LBCC allow it to be produced; and, finally, why was it selected for the honor of being here at the Regional competition?

The play is set in the mid-1960's and concerns itself with the menagerie-like existence of a group of college students living communally in an apartment near campus. The play attempts to provide a humorous insight into the problems of relating to the type of "free-everything" life-style that the protest-era of the 60's has come to symbolize. In

hackneyed cliché, losing whatever impact they were originally intended to convey. This production took a potentially good script and turned it into a piece of theatrical tripe. This was due primarily to a glaring lack of genuine interaction with the part of the cast.

There are other problems, as well. The set, for example, was cluttered to the point of obstructing the blocking, resulting in an adequate, but unimaginative and repetitive blocking. I was also puzzled at the necessity to have the curtain come down after every scene, when only minor changes in who was on stage were made. There were no major scenery or prop changes that needed to be "masked" in such a way. Simple blackouts could have sufficed.

The student performers of this play portrayed the characters as artificial, trite, one-sided, and

with the difficulty of a college student playing a college student. Pacing was another problem. The first act went quite well in terms of this. It moved along nicely with everybody picking up their cues and with some life to the blocking. Toward the end of the first act, however, things began to slow down. The second act continued this slowing until the production barely crawled. Again, this was not the fault of the actors, but of the script itself. The play also suffers from a lack of plot structure. Although there are some loosely connected threads that sort of resolve themselves at the end of the perfor-

mance, the play generally drifts from one inane confrontation or contrived circumstances to another. This results from the fact that there is no central figure or figures to hold the play together. The one character who could be construed as the protagonist has only two scenes in which he dominates the action.

Finally, the ending is a complete let down. It is maudlin and contrived. The main character is left alone and weeping, signifying the utter uselessness of his communal existence. Thus, all the pretenses and phoniness of the relationships within the commune are exposed. What started out as an admittedly raunchy comedy

has degenerated into a depressingly hopeless commentary on the "love generation" and its superficial relationships.

Instead of giving us a witty, incisive and sophisticated commentary on a much-misunderstood generation and lifestyle, we wind up with a contrived, superficial, trite, obscene and cliché ridden piece that portrays the "flower-children" of the '60's as insensitive, immature, snotty, and foul-mouthed pansies who are unable to relate to each other or keep commitments. Maybe the Class of 1985 will have better luck...



## Long Beach City College

doing so, playwright Weller apparently hoped to show the absurd and meaningless relationships and entanglements involved in that kind of an existence. To his credit, he did so. But in doing so, he resorted to engaging in the use of gross profanities, obscenities, and explicit referrals to sex acts, which unfortunately became nothing more than a horrendously

stereotyped. "Shelley" is an excellent example of this: she is your typical spaced-out-flowergirl hippie, whose great joy in life is sitting under tables because "...that's where my head's at, right now", as she puts it. The play did have its moments, but they were all too few and far between. And, in all honesty, I cannot say that I am impressed

Credy Smith

Bea Ratliffe

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# Up For Grabs

by George Stamos, Jr.  
YELL Associate Editor

The audience files in, milling about as most audiences do. On stage musicians tune their instruments in a corner of a brightly colored set, while a smartly tailored young man wearing a headset strolls casually about the stage. Suddenly, the lights dim and the man with the headset strides to center stage where, in his best Bob Barker voice, he welcomes the audience to another taping of that great morning game show--"Up For Grabs"! And with that, writer/director George Wolfe's stingingly satirical, raunchy, insightful and powerful production of *Everyman's* quest for identity and purpose in a confused and frighteningly complex world, has begun.

Wolfe, whose production is Pomona College's entry in the American College Theatre Festival's original playwriting competition, has skillfully orchestrated a genuinely moving and relevant work that is about as much fun to participate in as it is to watch. For, just as in a "real live" game show, the audience at the Judy Bayley Theatre is encouraged at the beginning to shout, scream and carry on as if they were actually at some Burbank, California taping of some inane contest. Only in this case, the "game" involves the struggle for identity of one Joe P. Thomas, who, for the span of his entire life, has been ensconced within a glass cage with only cereal boxes and a television set to relate to. However, for this particular game, Joe is set free of his cage, totally unaware of who or what he

is and sounding like a melange of hackneyed and stilted commercials. It is then up for the contestants to guess which door of life experiences Joe will choose to take, leading him into a series of bizarre vignettes which will mold his personality. Will it be Door #1? Door #2, or....?

These sketches, four in all, encompass the body of the play, along with flashbacks to the game show format interspersed throughout. The sketches serve as the vehicle Wolfe expertly uses to show how Joe is victimized by: a white hooker; Big Business; a movie producer; the Black revolution; and, even his own parents! (who traded him in when he was but a day old on Let's Make A Deal for a new washer/dryer. This is, of course, how he winds up in that glass cage for twenty-one years.) All while the "Up For Grabs" contestants battle away for prizes, prizes, prizes---which is the ultimate exploitation and degradation.



James King as the "Black Everyman" of Pomona College's "Up For Grabs"

performance. Thus, the vulgarities help to accomplish the establishment of specific ideas and concepts within the framework of

play: "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead": in which the two minor characters of Shakespeare's Hamlet flow back and forth between the reality of their own existence and the reality of what is happening in Hamlet. As critic Davy Marlin-Jones points out, though: there is a need for a clearer delineation of the two realities established in "Up For Grabs". In the critique following the performance, Mr. Marlin-Jones suggested that this could perhaps be accomplished through the use of different set design. Although his point was indeed well taken, the set used for this production adequately portrayed the situation and was used to its fullest extent.

The level of acting was excellent. I stand in awe of James King, who played the pivotal role of Joe of the Glass Box. Mr. King was able to go through the many metamorphoses of his character without losing any of the subtle nuances of each increasingly different and complex manifestations of personality. His portrayal of the wide-eyed and innocent Joe at the play's outset was done with an incredible degree of insight and empathy for the confused state of mind that Joe had at that time. Tim Goodwin, who plays the fiery but foxy revolutionary, Baba-Z; Reggie Cox, who plays the ruthless and diabolical megabillionaire, A.D. Agemo; and, Lance Hardy, who plays the convincing director, Merrill Carroll, also performed with great intensity.

It is hard for this reviewer to believe that this play was written and directed by an "amateur" playwright from Pomona College. I honestly feel that with some professional guidance and some minor revisions that this marvelous commentary on so many aspects that have such a universal appeal could easily play Broadway. In fact, it *should* play Broadway! I wish this production great success; I do not have to do so for Mr. George C. Wolfe, Esq.--- his future success is well assured.

## ACTF a Success!

By almost any measurement, UNLV's hosting of the American College Theatre Festival should be considered a success. After informally polling many of the participants on how they enjoyed their stay on our campus, the overwhelming majority expressed delight at the way the entire event was handled. Special praise was given time and time again to the courteous way in which everyone was treated.

Hosting the Theatre Festival has definitely added another feather to UNLV's growing hat of accomplishments. Such an event was just what we needed: It came at a time when our athletic teams are achieving almost meteoric fame

and deserved notoriety thus establishing the fact that UNLV possess outstanding programs in Fine Arts as well.

Hosting this event comes right on the heels of UNLV's triumphant production of "The House of Bernarda Alba", directed by Jerry Crawford, which was voted one of the ten best productions in last year's competition. That's a dynamite one-two punch for any school to achieve and an outstanding milestone and tribute to a young but excellent theatre program. So we say: "Thank you!", to all who made UNLV's hosting of the American College Theatre Festival the eminent success that it was.

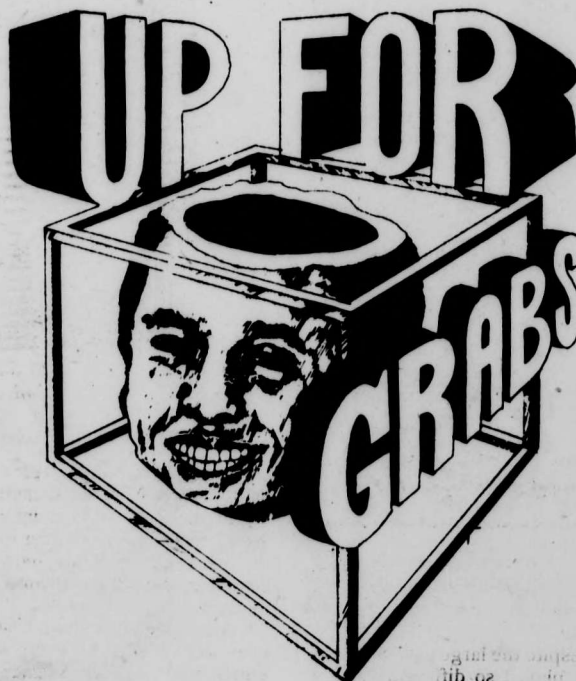


## Pomona College

Wolfe's dialogue is devastatingly funny. It reaches its zenith during the sections dealing with Joe as the combination "Shaft" and "Superfly" movie-idol-and-Black-Stud-of-the-Universe and with Joe as the new "hero" of the Black revolution. Admittedly, the dialogue is quite racy and at times incredibly blunt. But, in contrast to Michael Weller's "Moonchildren", (which this reviewer has reviewed earlier in the week of competition) the obscenities spewed forth here have far greater impact, because of the skillful way they are worked into the

the various vignettes and do not become, (as was the case with "Moonchildren"), trite, hackneyed, and in poor taste due to their overuse. It is also important to note, in this regard, the far greater degree of interaction established in this play versus "Moonchildren". This allowed the obscenities and even the best-towal of the "Golden Phallus" Award to seek their natural rhythmic place within the play, instead of sounding forced and contrived.

Wolfe's use of the game show concept in establishing the sense of a dual reality is reminiscent of a similar technique used in the



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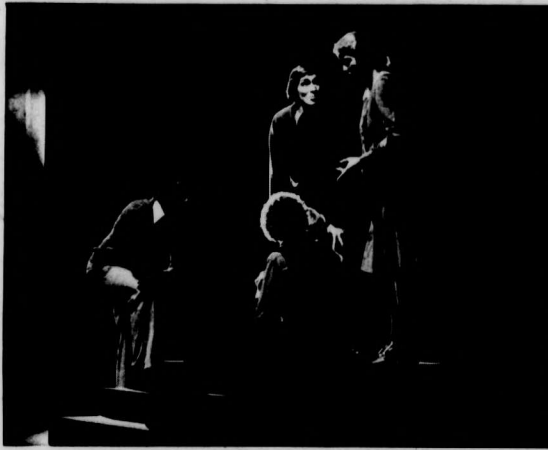
# Whispers on the Wind

by Darla Anderson  
YELL Staff Writer

"Eventually our lives are nothing but a memory--a 'whisper on the wind'." Such is the theme of the only musical in this year's festival, *Whispers on the Wind*, presented by Loyola Marymount University. Although it did have its good, in fact, great moments, the production ended up being too much of a whisper itself.

The problem lay, basically, in the play itself. The acting, musical, and technical aspects of the production were very well done, but the writing was just too weak to give a strong and valid message.

The production dealt with life; of growing up and growing old, of apartment dwellers, of lovers, of a young man going off and facing the big city. By the end of the two hours, everyone in the audience had seen something they could relate to. But that was the problem; they had seen maybe one thing, one scene they could relate to a part of their life, not a whole production they could relate to all of life. The play became like a TV variety show, composed of many different unrelated skits. But because the five actors involved in the play put enough of themselves into it to make it real



A tuneful moment from Loyola/Marymount's musical "Whispers On the Wind"

Photo by Office of Information

to us, the production did survive. Musically, the cast managed well, but again, they were hampered, this time by the songs themselves. The songs that were presented were good, but lyrics really did not add to the action that was happening on stage. It was like the play was stopped, a song was sung, and then we went on with the play again. Another flaw musically, was

the the way all the songs sounded: basically the same. It was like listening to an evening of Bachman Turner Overdrive. Once you hear one song by them, you know what the rest will sound like.

Despite the strain placed on them due to the basic design of the play, the cast did very well. I was delighted with Stephen Israel Rutledge as the little boy always

asking why, and then in time, as he is supposed to be thinking of sins to tell the priest, discovers his watch glows in the dark.

Regina Martin Piantadosi also did a good job with her many different characterizations that ranged from a Texas lass who thought snow looked like "diamonds from the sky" to a typical New Yorker, who rented out apartments. Victoria Tucker, who

finished in our job of watching.

The end we knew it was finished, but it just wasn't complete. A message came across, due to the good work by cast and technical people, but *Whispers on the Wind* fell short of its projected goal. It turned out to be more like a low whisper in a strong wind that was easily whisked away from our memory.



## Loyola Marymount

also acted well, was wonderful musically. She started out many of the songs, doing so clearly and loudly enough so that we knew she was singing a song, not just attempting one. David Elliott Ulmer, Jr., who seemed a little stiff the first act, soon relaxed and fell into the pace of the play by the second act.

Narrator Neil Alan Barclay also got off to a slow start as he tentatively came out on stage in the first act. However, during the show, he kept the action going, and he finished off very well. He did it in such a way that we knew he was done, his story had been told, and we, the audience, were

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# The Rosa Patentis

by Darla Anderson  
YELL Staff Writer

The lights are out and all is dark. Suddenly a street in a city comes into view. Then an old man comes up the road pushing a wheelbarrow. He stops in front of a telephone, takes out a TV, and begins making himself at home in the phone booth. Finally, all of his belongings are put away, the man gets in the booth, closes the door, and starts reading a paper. Then, all goes dark.

The old man of the phone booth is Mullen Hawthorne, the horticulturist-tycoon of Occidental College's production *The Rosa Patentis*. Written by Omar Paxson, professor at Occidental, the play is one of the two original plays presented last week at the regional competition of the American College Theatre Festival.

father after he ran away two years ago, are trying to decide what to do.

Basically, it is a comedy, but a few serious moments do creep up on us. At times Mullen will be listening to someone's story, and we, like that character, are puzzled when he says very seriously, "You're paying too much."

At the end though, we do understand Mullen's meaning behind this. As his children finally meet their father in Pittsburgh Mullen tells the world how he paid too much for some rose patents and how he suffered and made his family suffer for his mistake also. Tom Shelton does a fine job as he relates Mullen's story, especially when he repeats the haunting last words of Mullen's wife, "How much did you pay for the rose patents, Mul-



Tom Shelton demonstrates how one sings Christmas Carols on one's head, in Occidental College's "Rosa Patentis"

Photo by Office of Information

they still can be remembered individually. Mitchell Giannunzio did a fine job as the nervous Larch Arun, who finally gets the girl of his dreams, Mullen's daughter Mayrose (played by Brenda Malone). Lucy Lee as Althea Henbane, the yoga freak, also did very well, especially in the scene where she teaches Mullen the

proper way to breathe. In a festival filled with a lot of serious plays, the light mood of *The Rosa Patentis* was a nice change. While the show had the possibility of being too carefree and funny, Mr. Paxson never let that tone carry him away, so the serious moments did blend into

the whole show and did not seem unnatural.

So watching Mullen Hawthorne pick up his wheel barrow and start his homeward journey, it seems like it would be fun going with him; seeing the country and flowers, and not paying too much.



## Occidental College

The action switches back and forth between Pittsburgh where Mullen (played by Tom Shelton), is getting to know all the people that live around his phone booth, and California, where his children, now having found their

len?" With that off his mind, Mullen Hawthorne changes before our eyes, and his story is complete.

Despite the large cast, the parts were played so differently, that

# Festival of Scenes and Players, John Brown's Body

Special to the YELL  
by Frank Moran

Since the morning the assignments were given I have been nervous. Writing a critique is alien to me, so for the last week I have been reading every review I could get my hands on. I came to the conclusion that someone without any knowledge of the fine points in live theatre has to jump right in and begin in the same manner a child is thrown into water to learn how to swim.

A short time after the "Festival of Scenes and Players" began, I

dialogue; I am not sure if it was the actor's fault, or a shortcoming of mine. The contestants that sang in their scene, sang well. But the ones that sang were at a disadvantage because they did not have an orchestra behind them. In my opinion the ninth contestant was the best. He did a scene from "Long Day's Journey Into Night". In that scene, Judson Earney, of California State University, did the best acting, and should be lauded for his performance. He had the

The play is set during the Civil War, and the southern drawl is symbolic of the bigotry the theme is focused upon. The musical productions in the play are weakened, but are strong enough to be enjoyed. Secondly, the acting lacked emotion, and when it was present it took the appearance of plaster of paris. Ironically enough the best performances were given by the two blacks in the play. Maybe this is true because they could relate to it, and found themselves in their natural habitat.

The singing lacked projection, and as a whole the songs were sung poorly. But, I enjoyed them on the strength of their lyrics.

There was poor judgment in casting. When they were supposed to be in the South, they had blacks and whites dancing together.

There was a lack of sets. What they did use, they used creatively. The costumes were in good taste, and relevant to the time period.

The lighting was done well and with tact. The ensemble moved well on stage, especially on opening night.

In my opinion the director needs to be directed. But I have to admit I did enjoy the play.



The cast of LA City College's "John Brown's Body." assembled

Photo by Office of Information

## Los Angeles City College



realized I was at an advantage being here. Watching the 10 contestants act out their individual scenes gave me a chance to view comedy, drama, singing, and dancing. This was good preparation because I could contrast one against the other.

I was impressed with the "Festival of Scenes and Players". All 10 contestants have my admiration and respect. Each scene was done with an air of professionalism, the acting was superb, and each scene had a high degree of believability. Each actor or actress projected his voice clearly and precisely. I have only one exception to this. It was a scene that had Shakespearian

highest degree of believability. Thank the Lord the responsibility of picking the winner does not rest on my shoulders.

"John Brown's Body" is another story altogether. This production had two things going for it: the theme people in America (mainly blacks) are free, but are they really free, and the lyrics to the songs. The relevance of the play, which took place in the 1860's, and the songs being entertaining kept this from being a holocaust.

The acting was weak. First, and most importantly, the dialogue lacked a southern drawl. Not only did this hurt the acting, but it severely damaged the believability of the entire production.

**To Critique Play--** Prize-winning playwright Omar Paxson is one of three judges who arrived in Las Vegas in February to view and critique "Up for Grabs," a Pomona College entry in the Pacific South Regional finals of the American College Theatre Festival. Last year UNLV's production of "The House of Bernarda Alba" was selected as one of the ten best productions in the country and was performed at the Washington festival. Paxson also participated in the playwriting workshop conducted during the festival.



**Playwright in Vegas--**Robert E. Lee, co-author of the plays "Inherit the Wind" and "Mame," was in Las Vegas in February to view and critique "Up for Grabs." Lee, along with partner Jerome Lawrence, have co-authored some of the most enduring plays of our time including "The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail" and "Sparks Fly Upward." Their new play, "First Monday in October," deals with the impact of the first woman justice on the U.S. Supreme Court.



**Festival Judge--**Los Angeles Times drama reviewer Sylvie Drake was one of three judges to view and critique "Up for Grabs," an original entry in the Pacific South Regional finals of the American College Theatre Festival. The finals were held at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and between six and eight finalists competed for national honors and the chance to go to Washington D.C. for the American College Theatre Festival in the spring. This year UNLV's entry into the finals is "Where Has Tommy Flowers Gone." Ms. Drake also participated in the playwriting workshop conducted during the festival.

