

ENTERTAINMENT

Blairs interpretation of Chekov to premier at UNLV

by mark s. nicholl

guest writer

The opening of *The Cherry Orchard* in UNLV's Black Box Theatre on Thursday, March 17 at 8pm. will mark the return of two long absent figures from the UNLV stage. Anton Chekov, the playwright, has not been produced at UNLV since 1968 and the translator, Dr. Rhonda Blair, a UNLV alumna returns to witness the world premier of her translation of the Russian realists play.

Dr. Blair received her B.A. in Theatre from UNLV in 1973 and has since gone on to complete her Masters Degree in both Theatre and Drama at the University of Kansas. "It's a hoot to be back at UNLV," says Blair, "I think it's interesting to see how UNLV has grown."

Currently an Assistant



Dr. Rhonda Blair Professor at Hampshire College in Amhurst, Massachusetts, Dr. Blair has taken the time to come to UNLV to see her translation in rehearsal and work with the company before the opening of the show. In a play that varies emotional pitch continually, Blair saw the opportunity to help student actors deal with the dichotomy in moods. "Real people don't just feel one emotion at a

time." reveals Blair. "There's a playfulness in this script that's not in other translations. I did it with the student actor in mind." Dr. Beverley Byers-Pevitts, Chairperson of the Theatre Arts Department agrees. "Translators tend to treat classic writers with too much reverence. This is a very accessible translation for the actor."

Blair and Byers-Pevitts had talked about a translation of Chekov a couple of years ago and when the Theatre Arts Department decided they wanted to produce the Russian playwright the perfect opportunity presented itself. After some discussion over which of Chekov's play was to be translated, Dr. Blair took a sabbatical and completed the project. "It was a labor of love. I love Chekov."

Dr. Paul Harris, director of *The Cherry Orchard*, feels that it is a boon to production to have the translator present at some of the rehearsals. "There is alot of contradiction in Chekov. Her insight into Chekov helps make the script clearer to the actors and helps them get to know the characters better."

The Cherry Orchard is the story of the coming of the industrial age to Russia, the rise of the liberated serfs and the fall of the wealthy landowners as well as the attempts of those living at the time to

adjust to the new Russia. Although the play is dense in historical texture it is not a social document, it is a human comedy, like much of Chekovs' work both sad and funny at the same time.

The production also features the set design of Theatre Arts Senior Vicki Smith. The play is being produced in the round and presented a unique design challenge to Smith. Because of the configuration of the stage, she had to find a way to convey the feeling of rural Russia, circa 1904, without the use of major set pieces. "It was

a very earthy time. People were very close to the land and their families and those who could not adjust to the change were left behind." Smith uses a multi-media approach, a slide presentation on four screens to set the tone and project the change.

Dr. Blair also conducted a workshop for the Theatre Arts Department in improvisation. The workshop was based on the work of Keith Johnstone and his book, "Impro". Dr. Blair describes it as Theatre Sports or improvisation with a scoring system.

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NDT features guest performers

The dances of guest choreographers Ellen Bromberg, L. Martina Young, Minnie Madden and Jamey Gallagher will be featured in a concert presented by the University Dance Theatre at 2pm on Saturday, March 19 and Sunday, March 20 at UNLV's Judy Bayley Theatre.

Ellen Bromberg has highlighted the vocal theatrics of Bobby McFerrin in a group piece entitled *Toonings*. Bromberg is a teacher and choreographer who directs her own performing group in the San Francisco bay area. L. Martina Young returns to Las Vegas after her highly-acclaimed performance in last fall's concert. This time, director of dance Carole Rae has invited her to stage a new piece entitled *Black Ice* for the UDT dancers. Minnie Madden

has choreographed 13 dancers into *Street Slice*, scenes reminiscent of her old neighborhood in New York City where she grew

entitled *Chamber* and Opus Dance Ensemble artistic director McGarry Caven is re-staging one of his earlier pieces; Caven



up. Madden is working on 3 production shows in Japan and has recently completed the soon-to-be-released movie, *Dance or Die*, with a cast of dancers including UNLV faculty Eliane Vivace, performing in this concert, and local dancer/choreographer Jamey Gallagher who is also presenting a jazz work of his own.

Faculty member Deborah Stone is presenting an intimate love duet

is also artist-in-residence for jazz dance at UNLV. Faculty member and Lido dancer Cathy Allen will be featured in a trio, *Combat Zone*, along with two male dancers.

Tickets are \$6 for general admission with discounts available for children, students and seniors. For more information concerning the concert, or about joining the University Dance Society please call 739-3827.

Auditions are being held thru march 28th for the new play "The Forbidden Apple". Actors in Action will conduct the auditions at the Clark County Ligrayt located at 1501 East Flamingo. Performances include the Meadview Civic Center in Meadview Arizona on April 23rd. Other performances are being scheduled. The cast will include all age ranges. For auditions and interviews call 644-3674.