

Of Mice and Men portrays pain and isolation

This is a return visit for Guthrie Theatre actor Paul Ballantyne. Ballantyne is in Lincoln this week with the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre tour of John Steinbeck's play *Of Mice and Men*.

Before joining the Guthrie, Ballantyne played Lincoln with the casts of *Teahouse of the August Moon* 20 years ago and *Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots* 12 years ago. He said the town has changed quite a bit.

The tour of *Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots* later brought Ballantyne to the new theater in Minneapolis. The theater company was founded by the late Sir Tyrone Guthrie, in the early sixties.

"We were in Chicago and the roadshow was having problems with the light plot fitting the theater. A friend of 'Dr. G.' sent a distress call to him for help. I didn't actually think of working with him until two years later when I got an early morning phone call in New York," Ballantyne said.

The phone call was from Guthrie, asking him to join the newly formed company. Ballantyne said his involvement with the Guthrie has been a miracle he hasn't gotten over.

The 10-week tour is a homecoming for Ballantyne, who was raised in the Midwest and left his home during the Depression to work as a linotype operator in Chicago.

"In Ames, Iowa, we learned to adjust to a house that the Metropolitan Opera would be happy to have. The auditorium there seated 2,649, and the backstage was big enough to launch ships," Ballantyne said.

Adjusting from the relative intimacy of the Guthrie Theatre where the farthest seat is only 52 feet from the stage, he said, "we were just happy to find that we could project enough to be heard on our own," Ballantyne said of the large theater.

The six-state tour has taken them to all kinds of theaters. "It's been a special treat for us to get acquainted with new people along the way and to bring theater to friends that visit us at the Guthrie.

"People have been hungry to learn about theater. *Of Mice and Men* has been particularly successful because it

creates sympathy with the audience immediately," he said.

Ballantyne plays the role of Candy, an old shepherd. Candy is afraid of losing his job because he has only one hand. He has no worldly possessions except an old dog.

"The older people have especially related to Candy's predicament. He's an old man with nothing but a dog and the dog is shot, and a dream is broken.

"Sometime, everyone is afraid. The show has been successful because people see in the characters' alienation and isolation some of their own pain. A pain to deep they can't respond to it. Life is frail and sometimes desolate with the realization that no one ever gets to take anything with them afterwards," Ballantyne said.

"Audiences have been nothing but enthusiastic on our tour. That brings a new challenge every night and marks the difference that keeps the show from being routine.

"Part of our art is learning never to force an audience response, but to intrigue them into following. Young people are a joy to play to as they respond immediately, but a lot of older people are still afraid to let go. An actor can feel the audience hold back emotion," he said.

"The play has been rewarding to do and we've never tired of it. Always finding something in the richness of Steinbeck's characters has kept the show new for us," Ballantyne said.

Ballantyne said the image of the theater and theater people has changed over the years, but he still finds individuals who are misinformed about theater.

"They don't realize the energy that goes into performing leaves an actor mentally and physically drained. At one point, last season I was rehearsing two shows, performing one and replacing an actor in another and, by the end of the day, just happy to go home and rest.

Shyness has never kept Ballantyne off the stage. At 12, he knew it would be his profession. He says he'll always be stage-struck, as an actor or audience member.

"The call is born into you. Why my call was theater I can't explain



Guthrie Theatre actor Paul Ballantyne . . . plays Candy, a man with broken dreams.

any more than why a coal miner might have 14 children and the ninth one wants to play the violin.

"Theatre deals in human relationships, as *Of Mice and Men* does, and as an actor becomes more and more experienced, he grows expanding his knowledge and the audience's realm of experience. This is

a great gift theater has to give," Ballantyne said.

Unused tickets for Wednesday afternoon's performance sponsored by the Lincoln Public Schools have been made available to U.N.L. Approximately 100 tickets will be on sale at the door at 1 p.m. Wednesday, at Kimball Recital Hall.

**short
stuff**

Dance

Smith Hall is sponsoring a 1950's-style dance Saturday from 9 to 12 p.m. in the Nebraska Union Ballroom. Admission is 75 cents. All receipts will go to help an orphanage in South Vietnam. University IDs will be required at the door.

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Representatives

Students interested in being a University representative to their high school should attend a meeting at 4:30 p.m., Thursday in the Union.

Auditions

Auditions for the next University theatre production, *The Memorandum*, will be held Sunday, 7-10 p.m., Monday, 7-10 p.m., and Tuesday, 7-10 p.m.

Sole Power

There will be a film, slides and discussion on the 1973 Lincoln Walk for Development Thursday at 7 p.m. in the Union.

Volunteers

Visually impaired students at the University would like readers' help two hours each week.

For information about volunteer opportunities contact the Student Volunteer Bureau, 200 Nebraska Union.

daily nebraskan

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