

# Baldwin: thoughts, talks, colors create plays

by Adella Wacker

Joseph Baldwin's suit pocket is usually stuffed with notes—lines of conversation, thoughts, experiences—that may become plays.

In 1971, two results of those thoughts and ideas won for Baldwin two of three places in a national one-act playwriting contest.

Baldwin, a professor of speech and dramatic art at UNL, won first and third place in the Des Moines, Iowa, Drama Workshop contest.

And with the prize money, Baldwin and his wife went to see productions of the two plays, *The Fat Man* and *Have Exact Fare Ready*.

That was the most recent in a string of seven playwriting awards which Baldwin has won since his first play was produced in 1947.

In all, he's written about 30 one-act plays, and 20 three-act plays since college, Baldwin said.

"My only trouble with writing was not to write too much," he says, "like talking."

He also won another two first places in a 1971 Jacksonville (Florida) University one-act playwriting contest with plays holding titles like *Can the Frog Princess Find Happiness?* and *The Incredible Outbreak of Semi-Nudity*.

This month Baldwin said, he will attend, between final exams and grading, the opening of his play, *A Sky of Faces* at the Changing Scene experimental theater in Denver.

It's about the myths and religion that a group of zoo monkeys have built around the presence of strange faces in the sky—visitors' faces, Baldwin said.

Play ideas can come from anything, even a color, he said. His play originally titled *The Color Was Green*, for example, explores the meaning that shades of green have for a

soldier, he said.

"I have a compulsion to write plays, so I have one going all the time," he said.

Baldwin teaches introduction to theater, contemporary theater and introduction to playwriting classes at UNL. But strangely enough, Baldwin said, he also could love writing sports for a newspaper.

It takes a long time for a play to be published after it's been written and produced, he explained. With journalism, he said, "what you write today you see tomorrow."

And he almost was a journalist.

Baldwin was in the newspaper business when he was 11. He printed a newspaper for his Boy Scout troop with rubber type, he said.

Throughout high school and into college, Baldwin was headed toward becoming a newspaper man. He was born in Tennessee, but grew up in Austin, Tex., and entered the University of Texas there in 1934, he said. He didn't come out with a B.A. degree until six years later.

"I think I fell in love with college," he says.

From journalism he changed to an English major, a drama major and back again to education and English, he said.

Baldwin said his B.A. took so long because he was "busy all the time but neglecting to go to physics labs." He said he took every English and drama and creative writing class, dropping his science and required classes to do it.

In 1936, when he was a junior, the college produced *Front Page*, a play portraying post-World War I yellow journalism, Baldwin said.

Being a journalist, Baldwin went to try out

for a part, and got it, he said.

"I got to wear a snap brim hat, smoke cigarettes and make smart remarks," he said.

It was girl who talked Baldwin into taking his first playwriting class, he said. The University of Texas didn't have a formal drama department until Baldwin's junior year, but it had a drama group called the Curtain Club.

Actors Zachary Scott, Eli Wallach, and former Texas governor John Connally and his wife were Curtain Club members along with Baldwin. Connally was a good actor, Baldwin said.

Between getting his masters degree in English at Texas and getting a Master of Fine Arts in 1948 at the University of Iowa, he flew with a bombardier group in the Army Air Force, Baldwin said.

Not until being stationed in England, Baldwin said, did he "fall back in love with drama." London was just a short distance from where the Eighth Air Force was stationed so at Westminster Abbey he watched Shakespearean drama, and English actors such as John Gielgud and Laurence Olivier.

Back in college after the service, Baldwin wrote a play for his master's thesis at the University of Iowa, where he also earned his Ph.D. in 1950. The school produced that first play, *The Wishing Hill*, in 1947. Baldwin has been at UNL since 1958. That's the longest time he's been at any one place, he points out.

But still, Baldwin said, "I'd like to have a different job every week, if I could."

## Corea's 'Feather' floats heavily



Photo courtesy of Polydor/Grven

Chick Corea

*Light as A Feather*. Chick Corea and Return to Forever. Polydor (PD5525).

Keyboardist Chick Corea has organized a tight, fine group and is blasting away with ammunition like bassist Stan Clarke, percussionist Airto Moreira and vocalist Flora Purim.

Don't let the album title throw you, Corea and Return to Forever is anything but light. *Light As A Feather* features a Latin sound mainly to accommodate Purim's smoky-toned, Astrud Gilbertoish vocals.

"You're Everything," "Captain Marvel," "500 Mile High" and an exotic "Spain" rank as the best on the album, which, to put it mildly, is exciting.

Larry Kubert

*Watch*. Seatrain. Warner Brothers (BS 2692).

"Did something happen while your head was turned? While you blinked your eye? Keep your eye on the road. Seatrain's changed," the album promo resolutely hypes.

Surprisingly, Warner Bros. men weren't just kidding. Seatrain has changed. And for the better.

In *Watch*, Seatrain is loaded up with a new label and new people (adding Bill Elliot on keyboards and Julio Cornoado on drums). The group has successfully escaped its former limiting bag.

*Watch* displays an amazing versatility and scope, the likes of which is seldom seen. From the decidedly footstomping beat of "Pack of Fools" and nokey cornball "Bloodshot Eyes" ("I know what I been smokin', honey, and it ain't worth a token, next to you it's just a poke in the hay.") to the reticent sadness of "We Are Your Children Too" and "Scratch" is some distance. And to say the group is instrumentally superior is an extreme understatement.

Al Kooper's "Flute Thing" with deeply intricate harmonies and rhythms is easily the best cut on the album. It is, in fact, the best instrumental since early Blood, Sweat and Tears. And that's quite an achievement for a primarily vocal group.

Jim Gray

## Concerts abound as year closes

by Carolyn Hull

Finals may be approaching but Grant Johannessen and UNL music students are ending the semester with a week of nightly performances to entice students who study biology to Bach.

A solo concert by artist-in-residence Johannessen, in conjunction with a Nebraska Businessmen for the Arts conference, will be open to the public. The recital, with works by Bach, Schubert, Grieg, Faure and Chabrier, will follow a short speech, "Ecology of the Spirit," given by George C. Seyboldt, at 8:45 p.m. Wednesday, in the Kimball Recital Hall.

The Collegiate Band and Percussion Ensemble are planning an outdoor concert for 7 p.m. Thursday in front of Kimball Hall. Conductor Al Rometo invites students to come and "plop" on the grass, relax and have a good time. In case of bad weather, everything will move inside to Kimball, he added. Works in the program will be in a lighter vein, including "Parade of the Wooden Soldiers" and selections from *Man of La Mancha*.

With chairs and street clothes in place of sets and costumes, opera students will present scenes from *Adrianna Lecouvreur*, *The Magic Flute* and *The Marriage of Figaro* at 7 p.m. Friday. Then at 8 p.m. Saturday *Othello* will replace *Adrianna Lecouvreur* and *The Magic Flute* and *The Marriage of Figaro* will be presented again.

The scenes, presented in the Westbrook Orchestra room, are designed to test younger singers in roles they might not be able to perform in a full-scale production and to challenge the older students with demanding roles, according to music professor Richard Grace.

A lecture by Harold Schonberg, Pulitzer Prize winning critic for the New York Times also will be held Friday night at 8:30 in the Sheldon auditorium. Schonberg is in Nebraska to review a recital by artists-in-residence Zara Nelsova and Johannessen to be presented Saturday in Hyannis.

Guiseppe Verdi's "Requiem" will be presented at 3 p.m. Sunday in the Coliseum. Verdi's prime impact in the music world was opera, and according to conductor Emanuel Wishnow, that dramatic quality carries over in "Requiem" making it an exciting piece with the feeling of a non-staged drama rather than the more traditional serious memorial.

Compositions by UNL music students also will be performed Monday night. "Discussion for Two Pianos" by Laurie Edwards, "Sonata for Bass Trombone & Piano" by Mike Hoefs, "Mixed Emotions for Solo Clarinet" by Ron Mills, "A Sight du Camp" by Bruce Chapman, "Piece in Three Movements" by Rex Cadwallader, "Four Songs from E.E. Cummings" by Don Gorder, and "Music for Brass Quintet" by Noyes Batholomew were chosen to be performed as representative of work done by Robert Beadell's students.

Ending the week-long activities is a french horn recital by Clarence Cooper, professor of composition at Rutgers University and visiting professor at UNL. The recital, at 8 p.m. next Tuesday at the Kimball Recital Hall, will feature a number by Noel DaCosta, "Chime Tones for Solo Horn, Vibraphone and Chime" written specially for the recital.