

Nebraska poets employ modern, personal themes



By Bill Roberts
Nebraska Poets, edited by Greg Kuzma/The Best Cellar Press, Crete, Neb., \$3

The urge to discover what these 36 Nebraska poets write about probably comes more from voyeurism than state patriotism. Certainly *Nebraska Poets* will satisfy readers interested in peeking into people's private lives, more than those interested in "life on the prairie." There are no Conestoga wagons here.

Most of these poems, selected by Greg Kuzma, UNL poetry instructor, have a personal theme and contemporary setting.

Nancy L. Mastalir's poem, "11/5/74," is an example. The title and first line imply that Mastalir's life changed on that date: "I do not want to be old while I am young," she begins. A metaphor of trees slides neatly into the poem: "So young, already giving up the leaves." The poem ends with the convincing declaration, "I shall not be married."

"Butchering, 1936," by Claire Mattern, tells a literal and chilling story of a hog's fate. Mattern must have drawn on farmyard experience to describe so expertly the details of the killing and its purpose.

Poems about poems

Several poems about poets, poetry and the very poem being written appear. Nancy Peters, in "The Poem Poem," tells of her assignment to describe poetically a spider on the wall. She found a web but no spider and as she relates her quandry, "This becomes that poem."

Greg Kosmicki, in "A Good Poem to Die By," says, "I want the poem to be everybody's last request of me." This and several other things, he writes, should be brought to him "wrapped in a plain brown grease spotted poem."

"My Lawyer & I," by Carl Chrisman, is an ironic and hilarious tale of jungle intrigue and an assault by a huge ape. Although it begins with a group of men deciding to check on their interest, Chrisman makes sense of it all by puns and dream-logic.

The personal manner of much of this work naturally comes from humble subject matter. Ted Kooser's beautiful "In the Corners of Fields," James Nelesen's funny "Weeds," and Nancy McCleery's erotic "Bruise" show this in their titles.

Grand subjects, then soar

On the other hand, some of the poems start with grand subjects and then soar upwards. "A Winter Celebration For My Son and Daughter," by Mordecai Marcus, has intense personal passion and a high purpose. Greg Kuzma's "The Highwayman" is mythic, not personal at all, and one of the best, most exciting poems in the book.

Perhaps the best generalization to make about this book is that it's a mixed bag. The quality is as varied as the subject matter. For example, Roy Scheele's snappy "One For The Kids," about a bumblebee, is followed by the awful "Demoralized," an unnecessary retelling of an Aesop fable.

The book may be hard to characterize, but it's easy to like. Good poetry is being written in this state, and *Nebraska Poets* offers a reasonable priced selection of it.

Gallery Theatre Production presents an enjoyable view into poet's world

By Charlie Krig

"We're going to travel fast and far tonight because we have a world to girdle and cross in less than two hours: the fabulous World of Carl Sandburg."

With these words, Colleen Blair will open the next Gallery Theatre Production at the Lincoln Community Playhouse, tonight at 8.

It was previewed Tuesday.

Once the lights come up on the small, intimate stage, you know that this evening will be one of delight and variety, and the capable cast of *The World of Carl Sandburg* will keep you entertained.

Director Molly Lange has assembled eight talented actors, Ann Perkinson, Colleen Blair, Carol Svoboda, Alice Hasenyager, Lee Lukehart, Mark Johnson, Larry Miller and Don Williamson, in an adaptation of Sandburg's

works by Norman Corwin. In the course of the play, which actually is a reader's theatre, topics range from fog to love to tableclothes to babies.

The mood also varies subjects, bringing out the company's talent in all modes of emotion and expression.

Ann Perkinson's truthful tale about the joy and sobriety of motherhood is matched by the nonsensical "Hong-dorshe" proverb by Alice Hasenyager.

Doug Pipan also is worth mentioning for his imaginative lighting design. With every change of rhythm, mood or theme, an appropriate emphasis was given the actors and set. He enhanced each part without detracting from its importance.

The play also will run this weekend at 8 p.m. Feb. 20 and 21, with a 2:30 p.m. matinee Feb. 22. Phone 489-9608 for reservations.

Trio's concert ahead

The Sheldon Trio will honor George Washington's birthday with a concert of American music Sunday at 8 p.m. in the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery. General public tickets cost \$2 and student tickets are \$1.50.

The program includes a String Quartet supposedly written by Benjamin Franklin. The composition, which was discovered in Paris in the 1940s, requires the violins to be mis-tuned. This eccentricity is one reason scholars believe Franklin wrote the piece.

Also on the program are works by Charles Wakefield Cadman, Douglas Moore, Louis Gottschalk, Leonard Bernstein, Robert Russell Bennett and Arthur Fotte.

Jack Snider, UNL Band director, will appear as guest violinist of regular trio members Dorothy and Cary Lewis and Arnold Schatz.

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