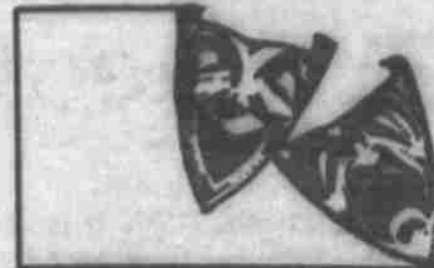


arts & entertainment



Playwright's latest drama touches on touchy subject

By Carla Engstrom

Growing old in America is a touchy subject. But Joseph Baldwin, theatre arts professor, has gone beyond speculation. He has explored the somewhat taboo subject in our society known as male menopause.

In his play, *A Secret and Personal Odyssey Behind a Wall of Glass*, he delves into the psychological problems that attack a 55-year-old man.

"It's a change in life when you recognize that, by gosh, you really are eligible to die. You can have chest pains and you don't know if it's gas or a real problem," Baldwin said.

It's a play about anxiety and the main character probes into himself with the help of a psychiatrist.

A point in life

The reason the 58-year-old playwright is concerned with male menopause is that man comes to a point in life and "it looks like you've done just about all you're going to do. Then you start thinking what have I done with my life? Men used to try not to recognize it.

"We don't even have good patterns for growing old in America. And it's taboo to talk about death."

He remarked that the play had some therapeutic value for himself and it helped "get some of my own things in order."

This play and *Lars and Emma*, a serious drama about Scandinavians in the 19th Century on the plains, are currently in the hands of his agent.

Haunted libraries

As a youth, Baldwin said he haunted the public libraries, stumbled on the play bookshelf and loved dialogue. He thought Noel Coward's characters were sophisticated compared to his conservative family life and found himself terribly timid, he added.

"I didn't date girls until I was 17 because I was so shy."

Yet Baldwin always seemed to be involved in some form of writing.

He spent part of undergraduate life at the University of Texas (UT) as night editor on the *Daily Texan*. Then his interests shifted, creative writing got hold of him and he switched from journalism to English.

In 1940, he was graduated from UT with his B.A. in English. He began teaching public schools in Austin "to prove to my father that I could hold a job." He received his M.A. from UT in English in 1946.

He went to the University of Iowa to receive his M.F.A. in speech and dramatic art, and in 1950 he had earned his Ph.D.

Completed first play

By 1947, he had his first completed play produced entitled *The Wishing Hill*.

"At the time I didn't quite know what I was doing. I recognized I needed to learn more about theatre. But it was good enough to give me the feeling that I could do something."

Baldwin is the author of 16 long plays and more than 200 one-acts.

This year he participated in the Bicentennial Festival of American Plays with American Actors in Greewich, N.Y.

His play, *A Deed from the King of Spain*, was billed along with Eugene O'Neil's *Desire under the Elms*, Tennessee William's *This Property is Condemned* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Imamu Amiri Baraka's *The Slave* and Israel Horowitz's *The Indian Wants the Bronx*.

Howard Thomas, in *The New York Times* said Baldwin's play, "simmers like a Chekhovian chamber work that boils into a darkly sardonic symphony."

His name in lights

He journeyed to New York for the occasion and, reflecting back, he said, "I wouldn't have missed my play in a New York theatre and my name up in lights.

"I feel more comfortable about a play in New York or Alabama, because if it bombs out I can get out of town.

"Anywhere you're doing a play, you go in with great fear and exhilaration. Playwrights pace like fathers waiting for their baby before the play goes on.

The play he got the most satisfaction from was *Sky of Faces*.

"It came off the best of any of them," he said. The characters took on animal characteristics, their actions suggested monkey behavior.

Joined UNL in 1958

Baldwin came to UNL in 1958. He had



Photo by Ted Kirk

Joseph Baldwin, theatre arts professor and author of *A Secret and Personal Odyssey Behind a Wall of Glass*.

been acting chairman of the Theatre Dept. until Rex McGraw arrived.

"I'm happy we have a new chairman. Acting as chairman takes away from my writing time. I'm back to my first loves, writing plays, teaching plays and directing plays."

The stage, to Baldwin, leads and focuses on people.

"Every art form has its limitations and your limitations can be your strength. Plays give us the most concentrated

experience of human action, live and right now. It involves audience participation and that's why people pay money to watch actors talk for two hours."

Baldwin said his ambition now is to be a "very healthy old man."

"I want my eyes to hold out so I can read and write," he added.

Since the national retirement age is 65, Baldwin has seven years of teaching left. "And I'm going to make them seven good years," he said.

Violinist will play concerto Tuesday

Internationally acclaimed violinist Ruggiero Ricci will open the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra's season with his performance of Prokofiev's *Second Concerto in G minor* at 8 p.m. Tuesday in Nebraska Wesleyan University's O'Donnell Auditorium.

Robert Anders Emile will conduct the Lincoln Symphony, which also will perform Berlioz's *Overture to Le Corsaire* and Tchaikovsky's *Fourth Symphony*.

In addition to conducting the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra and serving as its musical director, Emile is also at UNL School of Music professor.

Season and individual tickets and information can be obtained from the Lincoln Symphony office.

Lincoln Symphony is in its 51st season.



Daily Nebraskan Photo

Robert Anders Emile, conductor of the Lincoln Symphony.

Recital to feature music and motion

Music and motion will be featured in the annual faculty recital at 8 p.m. Tuesday in Kimball Recital Hall.

The recital, coordinated by David Van de Bogart, Lincoln Symphony Orchestra flutist and UNL School of Music assistant professor, will combine music and dance. It is entitled *Music and Motion*.

The performing ensemble, Sphinx, consisting of dancer Paula Vandenberg White and her husband, composer-musician L. Keith White, will be included in several of the pieces. David White's as yet unfinished composition, *Fable Fabric*, will be presented for the first time. Flutist Rebecca Van de Bogart will accompany David Van de Bogart and the Whites in this "simple and reflective piece."

The work has five movements: Pencil Tones; Circles and Cycles; Soft Smiles and Rainbow Eyes; Sweet Whisper Parade; and Pretty Days and Straw Hats.

The Whites composition is called "simplistic in the design of it all, yet very subtle and sophisticated in its message and intent."

Other features of the program are: Donizetti's *Sonata for Flute and Piano*, with UNL Prof. Audun Ravan as pianist; Stamitz' *Caprices for Solo Flute*; Larry White's *Butterfly for Flute and Piano*; and Hotteterre's *Echoes for Two Flutes and Dancer*.

Percussionists for the program will be UNL Prof. Al Rometo and UNL students Doug Mahle and Rich Jones.

According to Van de Bogart, this type of presentation is made possible because "the faculty consists of a congregation of artists able to do chamber works that otherwise would not be affordable."

The performance is free of charge.

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