

# arts and entertainment

## 'The American Friend,' international intrigue in art

By J. Marc Mushkin

Have you ever noticed how Dennis Hopper's name in an article almost always is followed by "of *Easy Rider*?" Hopper has been virtually invisible since that important role in the late 60s, but he certainly is visible, although elusive, in the new thriller that opened at the Sheldon Film Theater last night, *The American Friend*.

### movie review

Hopper plays the enigmatic Tom Ripley, an American in a cowboy hat who seems to be involved with an art forgery ring. The story brings Ripley together with Jonathan Zimmermann (Bruno Ganz), a German picture-framer and art restorer, in a suspenseful race with organized crime, violent murder, and Zimmermann's own imminent death.

Zimmermann, it seems has a terminal blood disease, and the cost of treatment is forcing his wife to work. So the approach of Raoul Minot (Gerard Blain) with an offer of money and special medical treatment turns this ordinarily peaceful man,

who at first finds the thought of murder inconceivable, into a hired killer.

The most interesting aspects of the movie are the effects of Minot's offer: Zimmermann's transformation into a hit man and the development of Ripley and Zimmermann's friendship.

Zimmermann and Ripley first meet at an auction (where one of the forgeries Ripley deals in is being sold) with Zimmermann's refusing to shake Ripley's hand saying coolly, "I've heard about you." The ice melts, though, and by the time they are brought together on a train for Zimmermann's second murder a curious friendship has been forged out of the dancer.

I really shouldn't dwell on the story; I don't want to take anything away from the suspense that director and writer Wim Wenders generates from Patricia Highsmith's novel, *Ripley's Game*. And there is plenty of suspense. One can't help making comparisons with Alfred Hitchcock in terms of narrative development and characterization.

Hopper's Tom Ripley is a gem of a performance. Hopper manages to give Ripley that slightly demonic air of a criminal used to hopping from difficult situation to situation and from continent to continent.

Wenders moves the plot from New York to Hamburg to Paris to Munich in grand style, giving the art forgery and the murders the importance of international intrigue. In this milieu Zimmermann seems overwhelmed, and Ganz brings this out in his fine, understated performance. Zimmermann basically is a little man, and his illness has taken more out of him than his health. Without Ripley's friendship he would have been lost.

"While Ripley looks just as small (or even smaller) than Zimmermann, he is above the anxiety of his occupation. A great image of this is the scene where he keeps shooting himself with a Polaroid SX-70 as the prints fall around his shoulders. Ripley is the force that binds the different scenes and characters of Wender's plot. He just seems to be there at the right times — the train sequence, for instance.

That scene on the train also points out Wenders' sense for the thriller. Combining tenseness with humor and danger with speed, Wenders creates a sequence worthy of almost anything of Hitchcock's.

The photography and lighting further contribute to the technical brilliance of the film. From the New York skyline shots to Zimmermann's dark apartment, the photography is detailed and beautiful.

Wenders uses this traditionally American style, the action thriller, superbly. *The American Friend* is a gripping mystery featuring tremendous performances by Hopper and Ganz and marvelous photography.

*The American Friend* continues today and Saturday at 3, 7, and 9:15 p.m. at the Sheldon Film Theater. Admission is \$2.00.



Photo courtesy of New Yorker Films  
Bruno Ganz plays Jonathan Zimmermann, a Hamburg picture-framer, who finds himself in a case of international intrigue and murder in Wim Wenders' *The American Friend*.

## Collegium Musicum to feature music written before 1700s

The UNL Collegium Musicum, a group of musicians dedicated to performance of music written before 1700, will present a free, public concert at 8 p.m. Sunday in the Sheldon Art Gallery Auditorium.

The works to be performed include selections from Gregorian Chant (excerpts from the "Lamentations of Jeremiah"), two works from the Spanish renaissance (*Torre de la nina* by Ponce and *Villancico pues me dicha* by Belmonte), *Air for six viols* by William Lawes, *Madrigal: Non Havea Febo ancora* by Claudio Monteverdi and *Leave now mine eyes and Fyre and Lighting*, two canzonets by Thomas Morley. The program also includes pieces for lute, bass viol, tenor and recorders.

Most of the program is taken from the publications of Ottaviano Petrucci, the first

publisher of printed music. His earliest publication appeared in 1501.

The Collegium Musicum is a group of students, faculty and persons related to the UNL School of Music. They feature early music to promote the awareness of the vast and little-known treasury of old compositions.

Members of the group are: Donna Harler, Jo Fankhauser and Mally Keelan (singers); Sarah Boslaugh, Sil Parson, Jonathan Brodie, Laurie Scott, Gay Kohl and Margaret Seymour (viols); Dan Bernstein, Larry Hubbard, Quentin Faulkner, Dulcie Shoener and Marlin Palasek (recorders); Wally Gebhard (lute); and Tom Malone (krumhorn). Guest artists for the Sunday concert will be singers Mark Johnson and Charles Smith.

## Howell's upcoming idea play is a 'circus of the mind'

By Charlie Krig

*Travesties* by Tom Stoppard is "an idea play—a circus of the mind," according to William Morgan, the director of the final UNL Howell Theater production that opens

tonight.

Morgan, a theater department professor, said the play concerns Henry Carr, a minor consulate officer in Zurich, Switzerland. The play opens with Carr as an old man but he begins to dream of an encounter he

had with James Joyce in 1917. Carr imagines what could have happened to history if their relationship had been different and if Carr had met other world leaders in Zurich at that time.

The plot is based on a true event, Morgan said. Joyce started a theater company and Carr, a real consulate officer, starred in the first production, Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Carr was a great hit, Morgan said, which was "the one big thing in his whole life." However, Joyce and Carr got in a fight over the cost of a costume and Morgan said they sued each other over the "petty" argument.

In the play, Carr fantasizes about the fight and also imagines meeting two revolutionaries of that time: Lenin, leader of the Russian revolution, and Tristan Tzara, founder of the Dadaist art movement. To complicate matters further, Carr thinks the action takes place in a library where two young librarians bear remarkable similarities to Cecily and Gwendolen, the two heroines of *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

Morgan said the situations that develop are not absurd but reflect true human qualities. Stoppard loves to write about British eccentricities, Morgan explained, and the playwright even put part of himself in Henry Carr.

"It's an intensely, intellectually, playful piece," he said. "It shows the whole future of our society cooked up in that little

library."

Morgan also described the role of Carr as "perhaps one of the greatest roles in modern drama" that could make the play survive as a classic. He said it "provides a marvelous tour de force for an actor and demands things from all the characters."

Morgan said he chose the play because it fascinated him and offered a challenge for the cast. "I wanted them to strengthen and learn their skill. God, have they learned from this play," he said.

Cast members are Douglas Anderson (MFA student from Dayton, Ohio) as Henry Carr, Jack Honor (MFA, New York City), Jim Ryan (senior, Omaha), as James Joyce, George Loudon (Ph.D., Syracuse, NY) as Lenin, Steve Brown (freshman, Lincoln) as Bennett, Debra Miller (senior, Overton, NE) as Gwendolen, Judith Radcliff (MFA, Omaha) as Cecily and Melissa Baer (senior, Lincoln) as Nadya. All are theater majors.

Set designer is Forrest Newlin, costume designer is Pat Dennis, lighting designer is Michael Bautista and assistants to the director are Elizabeth McCord (junior, Nebraska City) and Deb Oaks (sophomore, Colorado Springs).

The play runs tonight, Saturday and Tuesday through Saturday of next week (May 2-6) with performances at 8 nightly. Tickets are \$3 students, \$4 general and are available at the theater box office, 101 Temple Building, 12th and R streets. Reservations can be made by calling 472-2073.



Photo by Bob Pearson

Jack Honor (L) and Douglas Anderson in Tom Stoppard's *Travesties*.