

arts/entertainment

'After the Rain' will float on a hypnotic sea

By Cydney Wilson

After the Rain, a two act play by John Bowen, will open at Studio 12 Friday and Saturday and continue to Feb. 16-21.

It is a play within a play set in 2183, presented as a history lesson given by a lecturer who is a scientist, researcher, hypnotist and leading history professor.

The lesson he gives concerns the flood of 1983, in which there were eight survivors. The entire history lesson takes place on a raft. The eight survivors are actually hypnotized convicts who are helping the lecturer as part of their therapy in order to become good members of the community. The character each prisoner assumes is similar to his own, so he can better understand his own problem.

The audience represents the class attending the lecture as well as members of the community. Upon entering the theater members of the audience will be given a course syllabus and there will be sound effects that will give a school-type atmosphere.

History lecture

The purpose of the lecture is to explain history. It is important for the audience and the prisoners to understand all of the lecture because they are all descendants of the eight survivors.

Arlo Kasper, director of *After the Rain*, said he chose the play because it has fascinated him ever since it opened on Broadway in 1969. Kasper has taught at Bethel College in Kansas.

"I had always felt a bit frightened of the demands and the work with hypnotism, yet here, I believe it adds a fascinating dimension to the theater programming," he said. "It's a very different and difficult play, with numer-

ous possibilities. Because there are so many ideas, you have to select which you want to emphasize. The play deals with a new society with a basis set in our lives, this in itself provides a challenge."

The play has been performed little, if ever, in the Midwest. It has mostly been performed on Broadway and in London, where it ran for more than a year.

Simple sets

The set is very simple, using only essential props. The rest of the play will be portrayed through pantomimes.

"The play was directed for a typical stage, and since Studio 12 is smaller, it has taken a lot of time on the part of the designer and the cast, in order to portray the play correctly," Kasper explained. "The first two weeks of rehearsal were spent making the space work. It's a physical show with lots of action."

Since none of the cast had ever been under hypnosis, Kasper had a hypnotist come to rehearsal during the first week. She was able to hypnotize five members of the cast, instructing them that they would only be able to see the other characters and hear the director's voice. She then introduced each character to the entranced members of the cast. The subjects really believed what they were doing. The hypnotist also instructed them to remember all they had done in their "deepest layer of sleep."

One member of the cast remembers being in the raft and watching a cast member walk out into "the water" (the cast member had actually gone off stage and sat in the auditorium). He yelled at the other actor to get back in the boat so he wouldn't drown.

Deep in a trance

Several actors really felt the storm while in a trance,

and remember feeling the waves under the raft, feeling they had to keep themselves from falling overboard.

Kasper commented, "The hypnotism allowed all of us to understand why the play is written in certain ways. It also enabled the cast to better understand a hypnotic state, so they can effectively portray their character. Most of their moves are pantomimed, so this helped their acting a great deal, because while under hypnosis they were really able to feel objects which were not actually there."

"Since I've never seen it performed before, I have no idea what kind of audience reaction there will be. As students in the lecture, the audience will probably be asking 'what kind of society is this?' The ultimate focus in the play is the type of community, and not the history lesson," Kasper said. "The audience should consider what kind of choices the community has. The audience will probably leave with a great many questions, which will gradually clear up as they think about it."

New material

"In producing a little-known play, you have a great deal of freedom in perceiving the play. Yet you also have to contend with the skepticism on the part of some people in dealing with new material."

Members of the cast are Howard Danner, Greg McCown, Susan Stake, Stephen Kazakoff, Joi Hoffsommer, Ed Hanlon, Todd Nelson, Kirk Benson and Toni Turner. All but two members of the cast are undergraduates.

The direction of *After The Rain* by Kasper is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for his MFA degree.

Cropper's voice bruises his well-crafted songs

By Casey McCabe

Steve Cropper/*Playin' My Thang*/MCA

Cropper's resume is certainly an impressive one for any student of rhythm and blues.

After an early hit on Stax records with his band the Mar-Keys, Cropper went on to help Booker T and the M.G.'s. He composed such classics as "In The Midnight Hour" and "Sitting On The Dock of the Bay" to be covered by Wilson Pickett and Otis Redding, respectively.

album review

A highly demanded studio musician, and a prolific producer, Cropper's claim to fame most recently comes from being the hired guitar for the Blues Brothers. Knowing that the association with the two pseudo-bluesters could be his ace-in-the-hole for a solo effort, Cropper discreetly displays the mugging faces of Belushi and Ackroyd on a button pinned to his guitar strap on *Playin' My Thang's* back cover.

Recognized as one of the finest rhythm guitarists, well beyond the scope of the average Blues Brothers' clientele, Cropper got me wondering why the talented musician/composer had not stepped out of his supporting role and grabbed a bit of the much deserved spotlight.

Vocal deficit

Playin' My Thang goes a long way in explaining the

situation. Cropper is an excellent musician, composer, arranger, producer, and interpreter of the popular musical taste. But a vocalist he's not. The most unfortunate thing is that no matter what the strengths are in column A, the single deficit in column B tends to drag his material into mediocrity.

While his voice is loose and natural (as opposed to forced and strained, the way some neo-solo artists deem necessary), Cropper doesn't seek the vocal variations his well-crafted songs require. The absence of any backing vocalists to provide much needed musical first-aid is occasionally glaring.

While Cropper may have extended himself too far in one direction, his solo effort still lends testimony to his talent. Aided by The Memphis Horns, old Mark-Key and Blues Brother Mate "Duck" Dunn on bass, and the expected stable of precision musicians, *Playin' My Thang* offers some tight, diverse tunes, always punctuated by Cropper's insightful guitar licks.

Funky rhythm

His own compositions are generally lighthearted and tend to be a bit funky in rhythm. The title track, third song on side one, is first to warrant much attention with its cute lyrics and instrumental break. "Fly" is a pretty effort that manages to survive despite aforementioned vocal problem. Side Two's "With You" takes on a "Little Feat" posturing, while the grittier "Ya Da Ya Da" that closes the album is perhaps Cropper's best effort. Actually the only song that fails completely is a lame cover of the 1956 chestnut "Let The Good Times Roll."



Steve Cropper Photo courtesy of MCA

UNL dancers benefit from Iowa City festival

Sioux Braun

Picture yourself in the audience at a dance concert when a woman appears on stage with a shopping cart and proceeds to make it the center of attention.

Is she actually a performer or is she a prop master caught between scene changes?

The truth is she's a performing representative from the University of Colorado at an American College Dance Festival in Iowa City. For the first time, Nebraska was represented at this festival, but in a more classical fashion.

Mary Jane Mastalir, a UNL dance and music major, said, "If nothing else, we provided contrast to everyone else in the program."

She claimed most of the Midwest schools at the festival gave avant garde performances at the informal concert.

According to UNL dance faculty member Wendy Hanes, the 1960s began a movement for colleges to develop dance programs.

"They felt a need to have their own organization. (The American College Dance Festival Association) to eliminate highly selective instruction," Hanes said. "They (ACDFA) stuck to their philosophy of being open and letting every one participate."

Comparisons made

Wisconsin, Illinois and Colorado were among the parti-

cipants at the festival. Some observations our representatives made in comparing UNL's program with other schools' include:

- Nebraska has fewer dance majors than most schools.
- Nebraska has an average-sized dance faculty compared to others.
- Nebraska has excellent dance studio facilities compared to other schools.
- Nebraska has fewer graduate assistants on its faculty.
- Nebraska has fewer dance performances from its students.
- Nebraska is fairly traditional in its choreography.

The big difference, said Hanes, is that most schools have their own dance department. At Nebraska, dance is a division under the School of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation. That changes the whole aspect of dance, she said, into a physical activity rather than a performing art.

She also noted that schools with national recognition draw more students from other states. Nebraska attracts students mostly from within the state.

Exposure provided

One important thing, Mastalir said, was that UNL's

representatives provided excellent exposure for the university's dance division.

Hanes, Mastalir and Leslie Schnabel, another dance major, attended the two-day dance festival with transportation and membership fees provided by the university.

James O'Hanlon, director of the Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, is responsible for that financial support.

"Dr. O'Hanlon was able to see the need for Nebraska to be represented at these regional festivals," Mastalir said.

The festival sponsored by the ACDFA has two purposes. First, it provides an opportunity for college dancers to have their works judged and critiqued by established professionals. It also provides workshops, learning and performing experiences, and interaction among the participants.

Professional dancers from around the country visit the colleges that plan to attend the regional festivals. They judge performances by the students for their GALA concert at the convention. Performers are then chosen from the GALA concerts for the National College Dance Festival in Washington. Winners from the five regional GALA competitions give concert performances at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

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