

## Musical revue features songs by Sondheim

For anyone with an affection for Broadway music and the songs of Stephen Sondheim, the UNL Opera Theatre is presenting the musical revue "Side by Side by Sondheim" at Kimball Hall at 8 p.m. Thursday through Saturday and at 3 p.m. Sunday.

The revue will spotlight an assortment of more than 30 songs from Sondheim's Broadway musicals like "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," "Gypsy," "A Little Night Music," "Follies" and "West Side Story." Each song is made into a small vignette that illuminates the wit and sophistication of the songwriter's music.

The seven-member cast includes Eric Boardsen, who is also the choreographer. Gregg Tallman, one of the two pianists, is the director. The commentator is Rex McGraw, chairman of the UNL theatre arts department.

New York Magazine has described Sondheim as "the man who restored quality and self-respect to the American musical theater."

Sondheim began banging out tunes on the piano when he was 4 and taking lessons when he was 5. When he was 15, he moved to a farm in Pennsylvania, where he was the next-door neighbor of Oscar Hammerstein II. He met Hammerstein after writing his first musical, "By George."

Hammerstein said, "It's the worst thing I've ever read and, if you want to know why, I'll tell you," and that cemented their relationship. Sondheim became Hammerstein's apprentice for the rehearsals of "South Pacific" and "The King and I."

When he was 25, Sondheim met librettist Arthur Laurents, who was working with Jerome Robbins and Leonard Bernstein on an updated version of "Romeo and Juliet" called "West Side Story." Sondheim became its lyricist, and his career took off from there.

He was lyricist for the 1951 musical "Gypsy." He wrote both words and music for "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," which won the Tony Award for Best Musical in 1962. With the 1970 musical "Company," Sondheim was named the season's best composer and lyricist. He won two more Tony Awards for words and music with "Follies" and "A Little Night Music."

Tallman will present "informances" a half hour before each performance in the Westbrook Music Building 119.

## Artist Billy Shaffer paints on Hefty bags, sings about Nebraska

By Jeff Goodwin

Local artist Billy Shaffer didn't always want to be an artist.

"I wanted to be a fireman up until last week," he said. A display of his paintings is currently on exhibition in the Nebraska Union main lounge.

The paintings are somewhat unusual in that they are painted on plastic-Hefty bags, inflatable life rafts and Go Big Red ponchos - rather than canvas.

"I couldn't afford canvas anymore, and I had these Big Red ponchos lying around, so I decided to use them," he said. "I think I'll use them for awhile. Canvas would cost 18 times more than an inflatable air mattress."

Shaffer received his bachelor of fine arts degree from UNL in 1978. For the past three years he has lived in Seattle, where he had a one-man show. He is currently working on his master's degree at UNL.

"A lot of people work with plastic in this plastic age," he said. "But I've never seen anyone use Hefty bags or beach balls before as canvas."

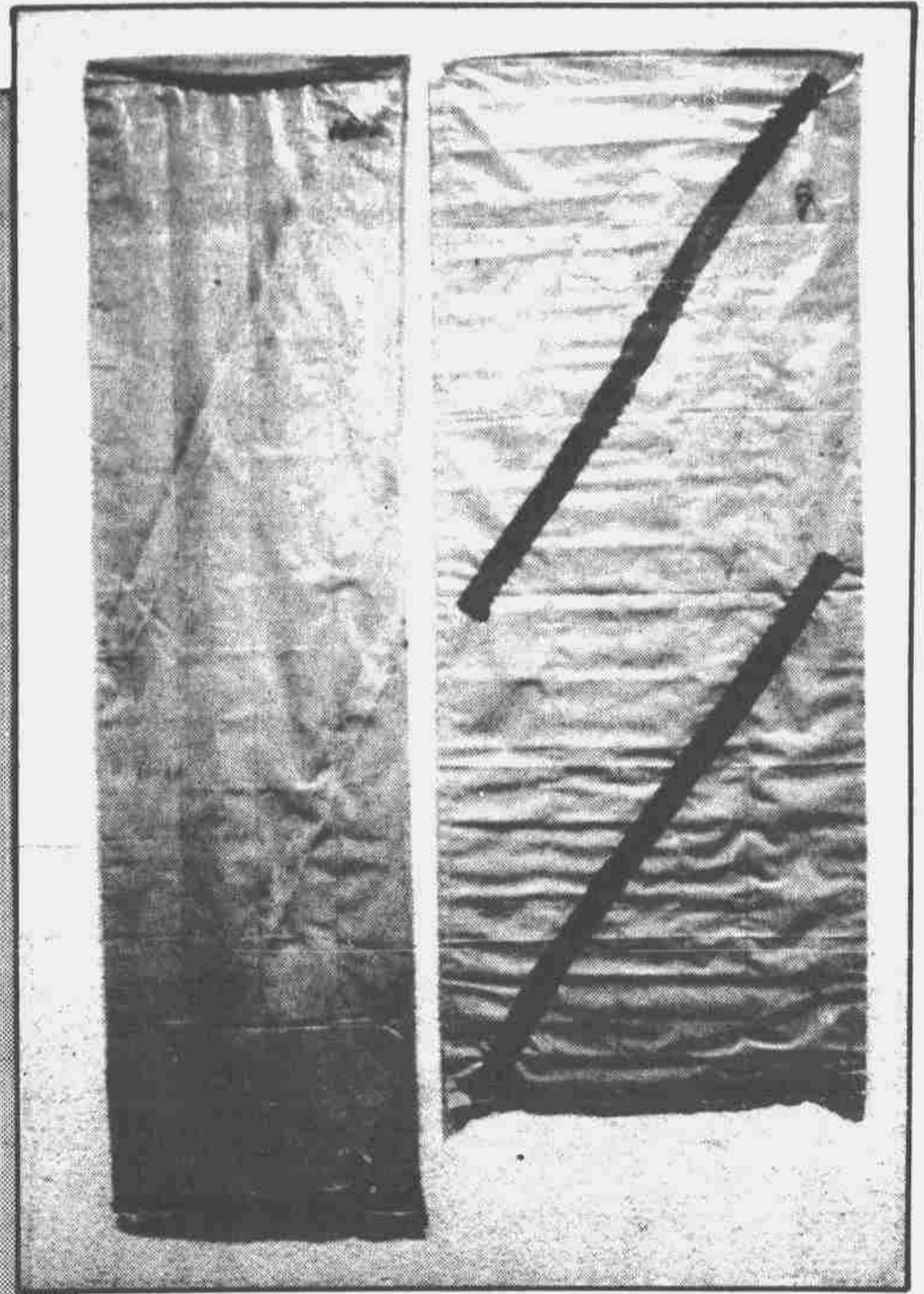
Shaffer, a veritable Renaissance man, is also involved in other creative fields.

He is a musician and plans to release an EP in the near future. One of the songs is entitled "I'm from Nebraska."

"I wrote it before Springsteen came out with his new album," Shaffer said.

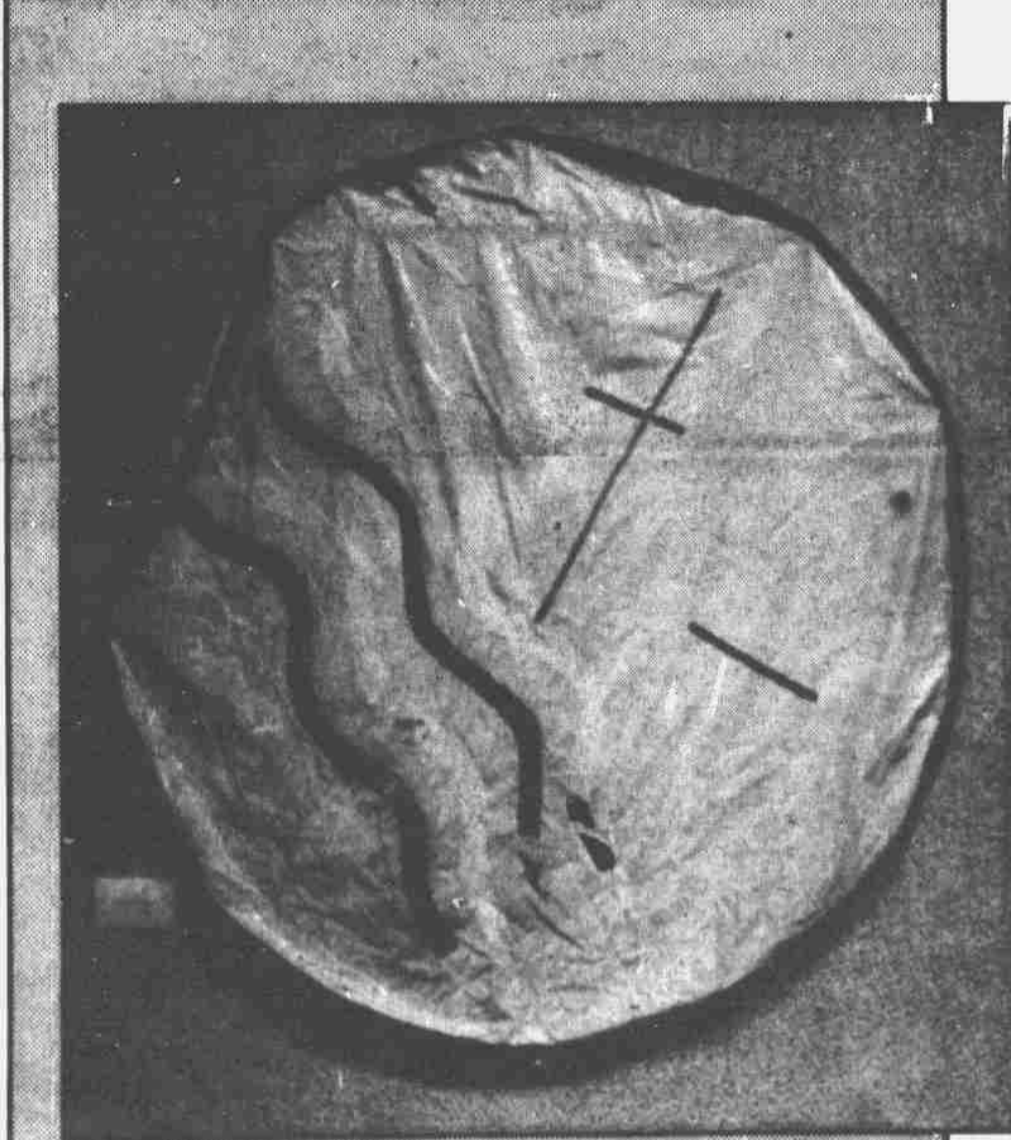
The album will be recorded with help of local musicians Sean Benjamin, Jim Jacobi and Dave Robel, he said.

Benjamin was formerly a member of the Heartmurmurs and currently is the head of his own band. Jacobi is the lead singer of the Crap Detectors and Robel is the drummer for Charlie Burton and the Cutouts.



Staff photos by Craig Andresen

"Arch Enemies (Best Friends)"



"Flamingoes Are Colorblind"

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