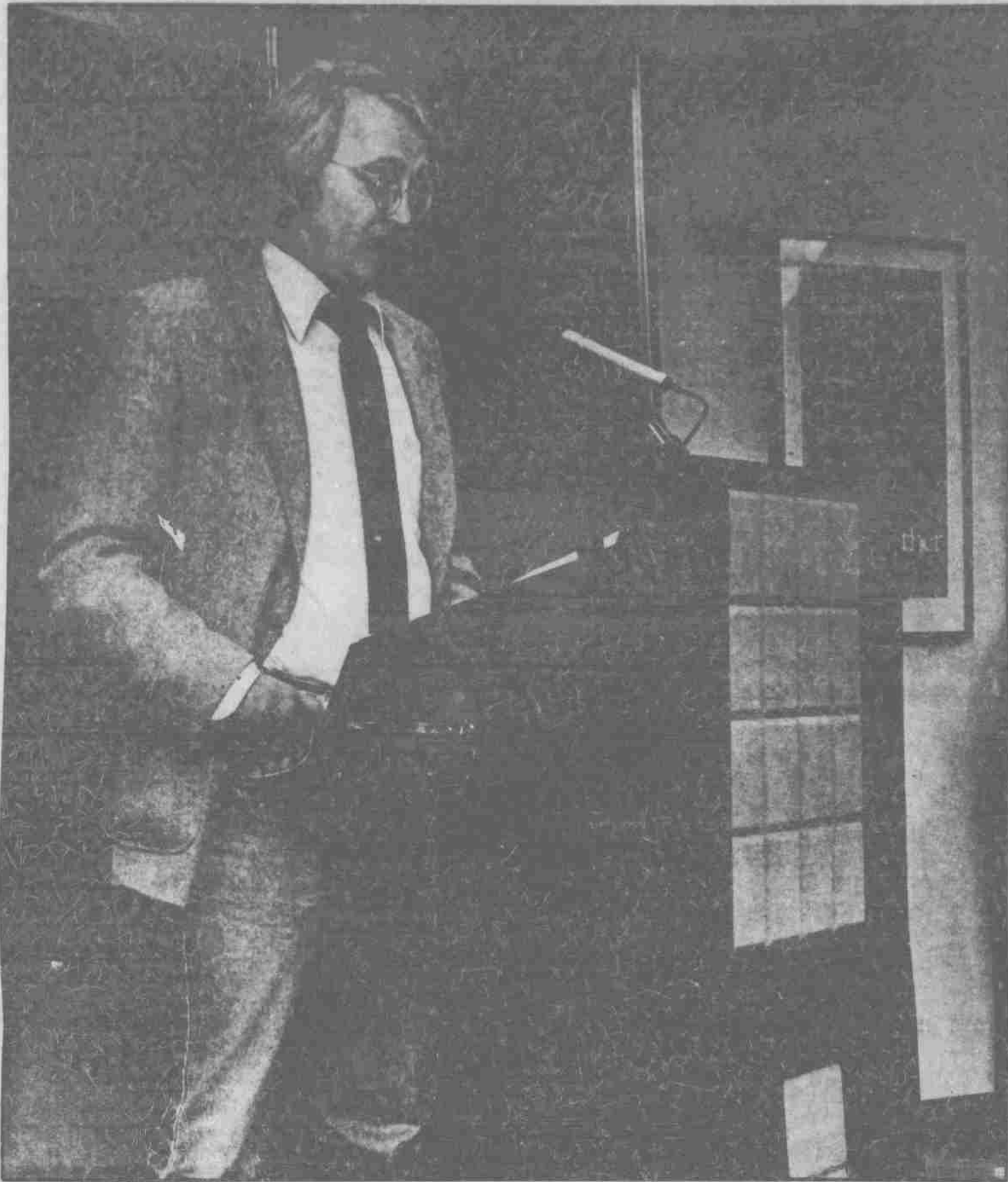


Arts and Entertainment

Poetry reading ruins notions of boredom



Kathleen Green/Daily Nebraskan

James Brummels, a poet and novelist from Wayne, read some of his work Thursday at the Bennett Martin Library.

'Bartered Bride' love story opera features folklore, dance, acrobatics

By Lisa Nutting
Daily Nebraskan Staff Reporter

The sun hangs from the left of the stage. Roof tops of different shapes and sizes are suspended from the ceiling — but there are no buildings underneath them.

"That's part of the fancifulness of the show," conductor-director Gregg Tallman said.

The UNL Music Theatre production of "The Bartered Bride," a classic European love story opera, will open Thursday at Kimball Hall. The opera will be performed at 8 p.m. Oct. 25, 27 and 28. Tallman will hold a "pre-performance" discussion at 7:30 p.m. before each show to explain the background of the opera.

"The Bartered Bride" was written in 1866 and is filled with Czechoslovakian folklore — dance, song and acrobatics. The opera, sung in English, is entertaining and fun, Tallman said.

"I think it's the energy — the joy of living that makes the show," he said. "The singing and dancing reflect that."

The bartered bride, Marenka, is played by Connie Rock. In the story, she is in love with Jenik, played by John De Haan. But through their parents' previous arrangements, she has been pledged to marry Vasek, played by Gene Cross. In what Tallman describes as a typical ending, Jenik turns out to be Vasek's

long-lost brother and Marenka thus is allowed to marry Jenik.

This is the third time Tallman has directed "The Bartered Bride," though he rarely directs the same performance twice, he said. The opera is special to Tallman because this was the first opera (of many) he directed. Since that first show, Tallman visited Czechoslovakia on a two-week trip.

"The Bartered Bride" is very popular in Czechoslovakia," he said. "And it's done over and over in Europe."

Tallman said he chose this opera because Nebraska has the largest Czech population in the country.

Tallman said the typical crowd is 70 percent community and 30 percent students.

"I've been trying to figure out a way to get the students to come," he said.

In order to not scare students away, Tallman tries to make operas as entertaining as possible.

"I think students tend to think of the opera as being above their level," he said. "I try to use music and comedy to make it more entertaining."

Advance ticket sales are going well and Tallman said he expects the show to do well.

The UNL Music Theatre has two other performances scheduled for this season.

"A Night in Old Vienna," featuring classic operettas and operas

on Feb. 2 and 3, will begin at 7 p.m. with a Viennese cuisine dinner in the Great Hall of the Sheldon Art Gallery.

On April 11, 13 and 14, "Albert Herring," a modern British opera comedy about men's liberation in Victorian England, will conclude the season.

A season ticket series — with one ticket to each show — is available to students and senior citizens for \$25. Regular season ticket series are \$28.

By Rachel Pred

Daily Nebraskan Staff Reporter

It's a drizzling day in east Des Moines colder than Nancy Sue Cunninghams' third grade heart. And Amos, the custodian, and I are alone in this Happy Chef men's room. But that's the way it is in east Des Moines.

From the poem "Amos" by James Brummels

I have always had preconceived notions about poetry readings, envisioning myself falling off my chair asleep, or adjusting my glasses a bit too loud and being thrown out for a noise disturbance. But after the poetry reading given by James Brummels, I am glad to report my notions wrong and the atmosphere was relaxing and informal.

The poetry reading was at Bennett-Martin Library Thursday as part of a series of readings given by Nebraska poets, sponsored by the Nebraska Literary Heritage Society.

James Brummels had a casual and amusing way of addressing the audience. His introductions to the poems were entertaining as well. When reading the poems, he appeared at ease and the poetry lent itself to being heard as well as read.

Brummels opened with the poem, "Amos," which came to life as he read it. With a Midwestern twang he assumed the voice of the character in the poem.

When Amos calls over the stall — I'm gonna use some deodorizer that'll be rather strong for awhile. It's concentrated' — in one of those voices that tell you he can get along with anybody.

Some of the same characters, which show up through different poems, give a sense of history and continuity to the work. As you hear about these people, a picture can be drawn. You may be reminded of someone you know.

"The people that you do run into tend to be real characters because they have incredible independence and often cultivated eccentricities. And that's part of the reason they're out there," Brummels said. "They don't want to deal with a bunch of people saying, 'Look, you're weird.'"

James Brummels has lived in big cities for a time, but most of his life has been spent living in the country. He appears to be

comfortable living in the country.

"In a sparse population or a real small town, you can't be anonymous; you can maintain your privacy yelling at people to leave you alone or shoot guns into the air at night," Brummels said. "You can be alone, but you're certainly not anonymous. You're the crazy person that shoots guns in the air at night."

Describing the scenery he lives around, he conjures up pictures as vivid as the characters he writes about.

Today it's the coldest it's been all winter. Last summer's grass holds some snow in its short reach, but most has escaped the withered grasps to settle in more substantial shelter, a file of young pines. Even there the depth barely blankets what needles the trees have let go.

"I noticed a lot of things when I was young. When you're that isolated you look around a lot more," Brummels said. "Sometimes it (inspiration) can come just from what I saw looking out my window yesterday morning."

Along with beautiful descriptions and various characters, Brummel's work is often humorous. His timing was excellent as he read the anecdotes, and the audience loved it. They may have slipped off their chairs chucking, but certainly not sleeping.

At times hearing the poems was like having a story read to you.

"I think that poetry has its roots in the oral tradition, it owes something to that," Brummels said. "Ideally, the poem succeeds both in somebody's voice and on the page. The best definition I ever heard for the difference between poetry and prose is that the right hand margin differs."

The poems in the reading were a blend of humor, of life experiences told in a sensitive and endearing way, and of characters that Brummels seems to care about.

Brummels received the 1984 Creative Writing Grant from the NEA Fellowship, and co-edited the poetry collection "On Common Ground." Some of his poetry also appeared in the collection of poetry "Forty Nebraska Poets."

The next poetry reading, by Roy Scheele, is scheduled Nov. 15 at 7:30 p.m. in the Heritage Room at Bennett-Martin Library.

BLOOM COUNTY

by Berke Breathed

