

Stage joins coffee at local joint

theater preview



By Mark Baldridge
Senior Reporter

When Mark Shriner looked around for something new to offer his customers, he thought of theater.

Theater and coffeehouses have a history of working well together, ever since the popularization of the coffeehouse as performance space a few decades back.

"I don't have a background in theater," he said. "I just wanted something extra for the store. I wanted to offer something to bring in a different type of clientele for the weekends—to have something for people to do."

But Shriner, who owns and operates the Coffee House at 1324 P St., needed help to make it all happen.

Help arrived in the form of Ron Silver, fresh from Los Angeles.

"I met Ron the day he came into town," Shriner said.

And so the Off Broadway, On Lincoln Theater company was born.

Silver had the necessary theater experience, after working for several years in the Los Angeles area.

He came to Lincoln, he said, because of business opportunities to be had here and the riot to be had there.

"I was just looking in the Haymarket for a studio space," he said. "I wanted to start a theater."

But the Coffeehouse offered an ideal home.

Construction began on the stage, which will occupy the back third of the store, and plans were made for the first season.

At some point Laura Strope joined the company as its publicist.

Strope was a broadcasting student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

She said her education has served her well.

"I write press releases, and publicity, stuff we learned in school," she said.

The first season consists of published plays, but Silver said he wants to move to scripts by local authors



Judd Fetters, UNL junior, and Angela Williams, sophomore, perform during a dress rehearsal at The Coffee House Sunday. The two are members of the Off Broadway, On Lincoln Theatre Company, which will perform four one-act plays starting in November.

Jay Calderon/DN

in the second season.

Rehearsals are already underway for the company's first show, which opens Nov. 4.

The one acts are: "The Enchanted Mesa" by George Maguire — which Silver said was a dark comedy about a post 1960s couple trying to save their marriage.

"Piece For An Audition," by Stephen Mark Tenney—a fantasy

dream state monologue.

Mike and Susan, which is excerpted from a longer play called "Lovers and Other Strangers."

And "The Tiger" by Murray Schisgal, which Silver describes as a drama.

He said he selected the plays to work together because they have the common theme of male vulnerability.

"The men in these plays are not

the typical male leads," he said, "and the women characters are stronger."

Silver and Shriner said they have been hard at work on the theater, and that they have high hopes for the company.

Silver said he was particularly interested in working with local scripts in the future.

"This kind of thing is very popular in bigger cities," he said.

Drummer, trio dazzle in Lincoln



Kahil El'Zabar is something of an institution on this campus. On his fourth visit to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, he referred to Lincoln as his "second home."

And certainly he has been made welcome.

A group of community organizations and businesses joined the university to promote a two-week stay for El'Zabar, as well as a week for his band Ritual Trio.

Their stay culminated in a concert on Sunday night in Kimball Hall.

El'Zabar on trap set is something to behold. His quirky playing style and submerged vocalizations seem almost comic — then suddenly, in a blaze of light, he is everywhere, all over those skins like some mad dervish.

Then, just as suddenly, he's back in the groove — his solo ended.

Performing with El'Zabar were Edwin Daugherty on sax and James Willis on double bass.

Daugherty's performance was spectacular.

Although there was a quality of sameness to his first two solos, as the evening progressed, he became more spontaneous. In the second set, his daring work took the audience to a spiritual plane of jazz.

Willis, an older performer, was particularly impressive. A pleasure to watch, as well as hear, he wasn't featured nearly enough — in fact El'Zabar seemed to try to tone him down several times and cut short his solo at least once.

The small audience was very appreciative. Its standing ovation called the trio back for an encore.

The size of the crowd may be partly due to the poor promotion of the show by its various sponsors.

At least one UNL student complained of not being able to find out from any of the involved campus offices when, or even if, the trio would perform.

Perhaps next year El'Zabar will have a higher profile in this city that seems literally in love with jazz.

—Mark Baldridge

Hillbillies' hilarities wear thin in less than 30 minutes

"The Beverly Hillbillies"



The movie version of "The Beverly Hillbillies" is every bit as annoying as the television series that spawned it.

It's essentially plotless, depending on cameos from stars like Dolly Parton and Zsa Zsa Gabor, and silly slapstick humor to make up for the lack of script.

While the movie is not intended to move the soul, it can't even move the audience to laugh without using borrowed gags. It even uses Zsa Zsa's police-slapping incident, which was already used in "The Naked Gun."

Director Penelope Spheeris gets a decent comedy performance out of her sterling cast, but it wears thin in less than 30 minutes.

The jump from small to big screen allows the Clampetts to get away with things the TV series' viewers could never have imagined. Cleavage close-ups, the finger — which they call the "California Howdy" — and even Elly May kicking a guy in the groin.

Wow, the magic of movies. After successfully taking "Wayne's World"

from a "Saturday Night Live" skit to a movie smash, Spheeris was apparently hand-picked by 20th Century Fox to do the same here. Instead, what she delivers is nine years of the Hillbillies series crammed into a 90-minute movie.

The Clampetts move to Beverly Hills after they strike oil on their land in the Missouri Ozarks. The family moves from shack to mansion, and they bring their hickish ways with them.

Overplay is the name of the game for the movie's stars. Diedrich Bader (Jethro), Cloris Leachman (Granny) and Erika Eleniak (Elly May) all overdo it.

Dabney Coleman and Lily Tomlin, as Mr. Drysdale and Miss Hathaway, and Jim Varney, as Clampett clan patriarch Jed, all do decent work, despite the poor script. Tomlin puts her unique charm to work and remains interesting throughout the movie. Varney manages to make us forget his alter-ego, Ernest, even in the midst of Spheeris's overwrought campy style.

If you like to watch the adventures of the Clampetts, stick to the re-runs. If you are a Spheeris fan, rent "Wayne's World" again.

—Steven Sparing



Courtesy of Twentieth Century Fox
From left, Jim Varney is Jed, Lea Thompson is Laura Jackson and Erika Eleniak is Elly May in "The Beverly Hillbillies."