

## Play shines light on free society

'Mad Forest' echoes with bitter reality

By Paula Lavigne  
Senior Reporter

On a plain where Bucharest, Romania, now stands, there used to be a large forest crossed by large streams. It was a Teleorman, or "mad forest," that could only be crossed on foot.

Playwright Caryl Churchill took her journey to Romania after the country's revolution against dictator Nicolae Ceausescu in December 1989.

She wrote her own "Mad Forest," which the University Theatre will present Thursday.

Beyond the newspaper headlines and television soundbites, "Mad Forest" exposes the human faces behind the revolution.

"Mad Forest" examines the history of Romania — an eastern European communist-controlled country where autocratic dictators used oppressive measures to control the populace.

It's a world director Ronald Wainscott said was similar to George Orwell's "1984," where one in every seven people was said to be an informant and the other six paranoid.

All women of child-bearing age were subject to gynecological exams at their place of work, and, if pregnant, were forced to come to term.

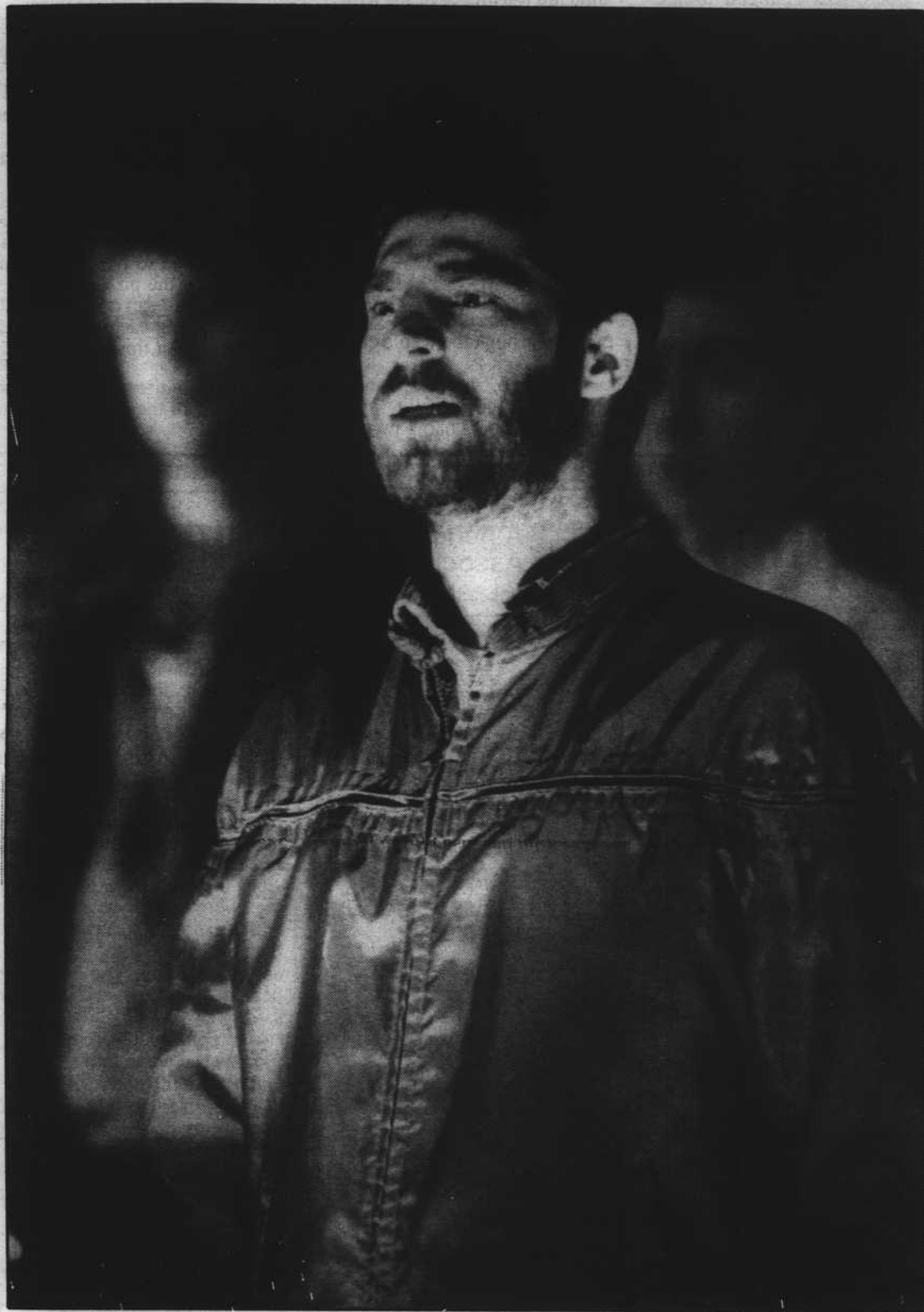
No home was allowed to have more than one 40-watt bulb burning, and the temperature was never allowed to be above 50 degrees.

After the revolution, Wainscott said, people did not know how to act in a free society.

"They spent their entire life in '1984,' and were unable to communicate except under the most extreme conditions like screaming or slamming doors," he said.

"Mad Forest" breaks this struggle down into three levels: reality, interviews and the supernatural.

The conditions before and after the revolution are shown through realistic portrayals, and each cast member plays several



Jason Richards, a graduate student in theater, performs during a rehearsal of "Mad Forest" in the Howell Theater Monday night.

Scott Bruhn/DN

different roles. Churchill then took actual interviews from Romanians and weaved them into the middle of the play. The play travels even further

into human psyche when it reaches into the supernatural world of angels, vampires and humans playing dogs.

"Mad Forest" opens Thursday at 8 p.m. at Howell Theatre.

Additional performances are Friday and Saturday and Feb. 21-25 at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$9 for the general public, \$7 for faculty, staff and senior citizens and \$6 for students.

## Accuracy important in history

By Paula Lavigne  
Senior Reporter

As a dramaturg, much of Mike Weitzenkamp's time is spent researching the history behind plays. But when those historical facts are inaccurate, his job becomes a challenge.

This was the case of "Mad Forest," a play written about the recent history of Romania and its December 1989 revolution.

Until then, Romania was under the control of Nicolae Ceausescu, a communist autocratic dictator whose government doctored documents and wrote their own books on Romania's history.

Assistant Director Becca Babbit said everyone who left the country had to be indoctrinated to speak of Romania in certain ways.

"You can't trust anything that comes from Romania," she said. "You can't pin anything down. Everything was doctored to influence the image of the country."

Most of the historical imagery in the play came from interviews conducted by playwright Caryl Churchill when she visited Romania in 1990.

The documented history, Weitzenkamp said, was "hazy" and showed discrepancies from Churchill's interviews.

Weitzenkamp did his own interviews. He found about 10 Romanians living in and around Lincoln who could help him with pronunciation of Romanian words in the script.

Weitzenkamp also has to find answers to technical costuming, scenery and prop questions like "What do Romanian priests wear? What does a Romanian wedding crown look like?" and "What distinguishes the Romanian soldiers?"

In any play, but especially in a play that revolves around history, he said accuracy was the key.

"Accuracy can show people something they've never seen," he said. "It can take you to a place you've never been."

### ACADEMY AWARDS

Oscar's Best Chocolates

- Best Picture: "Shawshank Redemption"
- Best Actor: John Travolta
- Best Actress: Jodie Foster
- Best Supporting Actor: Samuel L. Jackson
- Best Supporting Actress: Uma Thurman
- Best Director: Robert Zemeckis

Other nominees include: "Blue Sky", "Bullets Over Broadway", "The Client", "Ed Wood", "Forrest Gump", "Four Weddings and a Funeral", "Little Women", "The Madness of King George", "Nell", "Nobody's Fool", "Pulp Fiction", "Quiz Show", "Red", "Tom & Viv", "Morgan Freeman", "Nigel Hawthorne", "Tom Hanks", "Newman", "Jessica Lange", "Miranda Richardson", "Winona", "Susan Sarandon", "Gary Sinise", "Helen Mirren", "Robert Redford", "Quentin Tarantino", "Krzysztof Kieslowski", "Walter", "Robert Zemeckis", "Robert Redford", "Quentin Tarantino".

## 'Forrest Gump' claims 13 Oscar nominations

By Gerry Beltz  
Senior Reporter

At the Academy of Motion Pictures, Gump happened.

This year's Academy Award nominations gave "Forrest Gump" an impressive 13 Oscar nominations, including Best Picture, Best Actor (Tom Hanks), Best Supporting Actor (Gary Sinise) and Best Director (Robert Zemeckis).

Wheeler Dixon, chairman of the film studies program, said he was not surprised that the film received so many nominations.

"It was a very well-oiled, accomplished film," Dixon said. "Director Robert Zemeckis is very big on that sort of thing."

"Forrest Gump" was also nominated for art direction, cinematography, film editing, makeup, original score, sound, sound effects editing, visual effects and adapted screenplay.

Past films nominated for 13 different categories included "Gone With The Wind" (1939), "From Here to Eternity" (1953), "Mary

See GUMP on 10

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