

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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STATE ARTS

With Jeff Randall

Play gets burned by smoking cast

I've attended more than a few university theater productions since I arrived on this campus almost four years ago. Thursday's production of "Mad Forest" was one of the more entertaining events.

Entertaining, but not enjoyable.

My enjoyment was stifled by the cast's constant smoking. Someone smoked — and often almost everyone smoked — in almost every scene.

I understood why everyone was smoking. I assumed that cigarettes were very much a part of Romanian life in the 1980s and the playwright and the director wanted the play to be realistic.

That's fine for movies and television, but theater is something else entirely. Theater is kind of like inviting someone into your living room and making them pay for it. Well, it's not quite like that. But in both cases, you need to be considerate of the people sitting just a few feet away.

By the intermission, smoke hung over Howell Theatre. It was especially hazy in the first few rows. My nose was running. My eyes were burning. I tried to hold my coughs for scene changes.

Smoking is recognized in our society as a very real health hazard. It is unfair to subject people to two hours of smoke without even warning them. A note on the program, or at the box office, anything would have helped.

Knowing that smoke would be rolling off the stage would certainly affect many people's seating decisions. Most people prefer to sit close to the stage, but they might change their mind, especially if they have asthma or are sensitive to smoke.

Or the cast could just put out their cigarettes. Sure, you sacrifice a little realism if you're carrying and puffing unlit cigarettes. But it's theater. If you can make the audience believe you're in Romania, that you're a vampire or a dog, you can make them believe your cigarette is lit.

And they won't be too busy coughing to enjoy it.

Rowell is a senior news-editorial major, advertising and the Daily Nebraskan Arts & Entertainment Editor.

Phone tales from the Markside

Patrick Hambrecht
Senior Editor

"Velma's heart was a secret furnace of desire for the beautiful but insipid Daphne. Of course, everyone knew she was sleeping with Fred. They made the Mystery Mobile rock and rock. Trapped as they were in the traditional triangle, it's no wonder no one noticed Shaggy's gradual decline into drug addiction. He began with marijuana, but ended with heroin. Only Scooby paid any attention, and he would lick Shaggy's track-stained arms. Lick and lick, trying to smooth the scars. Storyline."

Every weekday, a new short story — maybe bizarre, maybe filthy — and a 45-second trip to the strange and surprising mind of Mark Baldrige is just a phone call away.

Baldrige is the man behind Storyline, (402) 441-9715.

He began Storyline two years ago after hearing the band They Might Be Giants' Dial-A-Song Service. Baldrige, a former University of Nebraska-Lincoln student, said he was inspired by the idea of producing a different piece of oral art every day.

After he learned that a voice-mailbox could be had for a measly \$6 dollars a month, he began the project last August.

Storyline is just a mailbox. Baldrige's own phone doesn't ring, but he checks the service two or three times a day to see if anyone has called.

The stories must be 45 seconds or less, he said, which makes writing tough.

"A 45-second story is hard to write, one that's interesting, anyway," Baldrige said. "The trick is to just share a snapshot of life that's somehow grossly changed from reality."

But, he said, it's better that the stories are short, because people are more likely to listen to them.

"I can't do drugs anymore, I said. They turn me invisible. Who said that, you said. Storyline."

As people hang up after listening to his stories, Baldrige said, he can often hear them talking.

"What I hear them say most," he said, "is 'I don't get it.'"

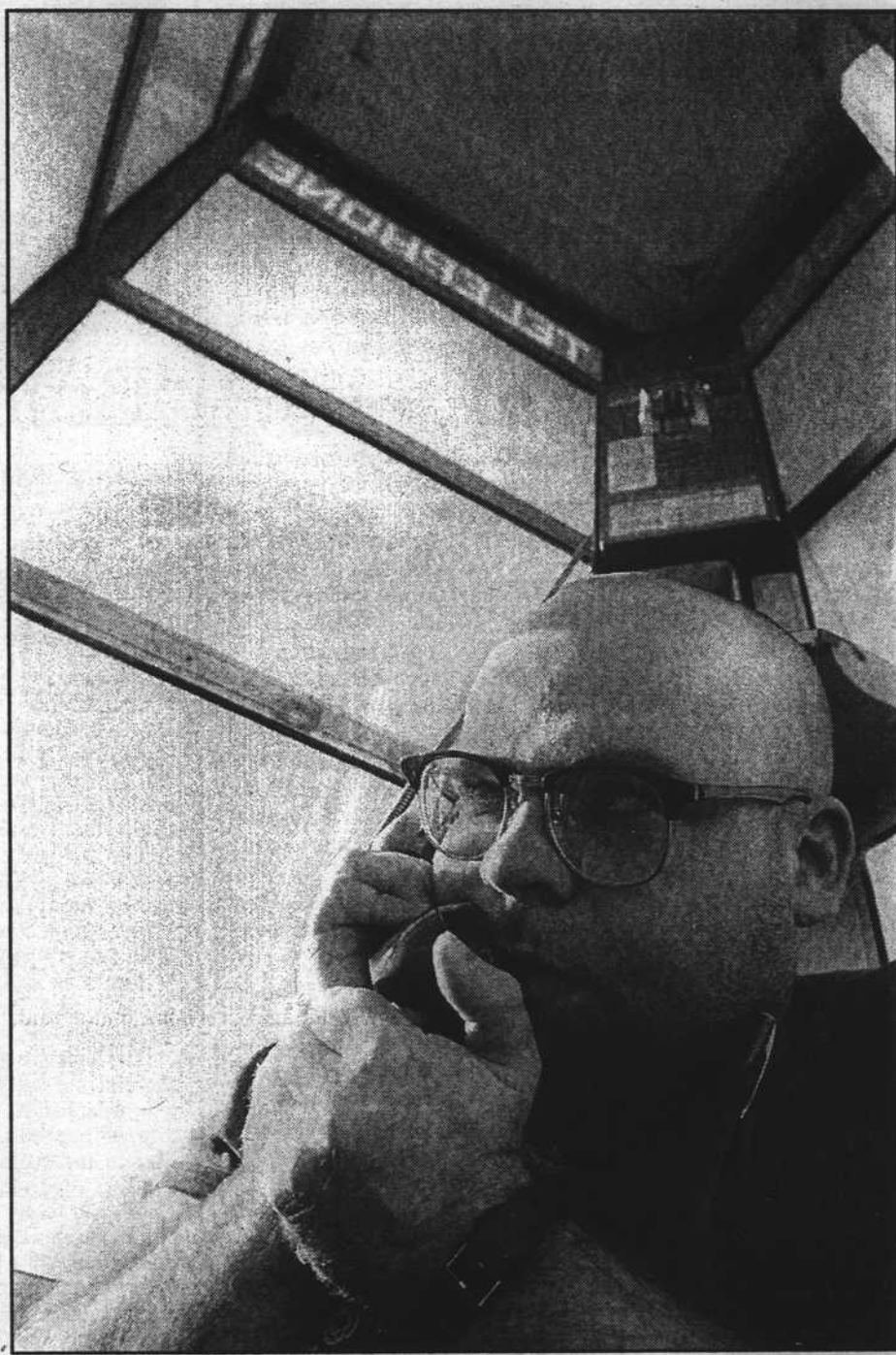
But it doesn't matter if they understand or even like his stories, Baldrige said. He writes the stories for himself.

"It's good practice," he said. "It keeps me in form, writing form."

When you decide to write a new story every day, Baldrige said, many of them are going to be bad, very bad. But others, he said, have been quite beautiful.

"I am glad to know some of the stories that I made up for the Storyline," he said.

Baldrige is involved with several projects in Lincoln besides Storyline. Budada, his performance-art platoon, has appeared at the Lincoln Community Playhouse and local parties; they also have a public-access show in the works.



Jeff Haller/DN

Although calling Mark Baldrige at 441-9715 will get you a new story every day, he uses a \$6-a-month voice mailbox, not a telephone booth to tell his stories.

He also helps edit an e-mail magazine called Backlash, which features on-line photos, art and music.

Sometimes Baldrige will spend hours making sculptures out of sticks and assemble them on a playground "to get knocked down by the first dog that comes around."

"I kind of like temporary art, one-of-a-kind things," Baldrige said. "I've done print-making with a wooden block, and I'll spend hours carving letters, and then I'll just make nine prints."

Storyline tales appeal to him for the same reason, Baldrige said.

"If you don't call that day, you've missed it," he said. "If you've missed it, and I don't save and type my story that day, it's gone forever."

"When I came to in the hospital, the wings were gone. The nurse showed me with a mirror — bandaged stumps between my shoulder blades. And I knew that I would never fly again. Storyline."

Show creates mystical realm

By Kristin Armstrong
Theater Critic

There certainly wasn't a better spot for happily-ever-aftering this weekend than the Lied Center for Performing Arts.

"Camelot," the enchanting, mystical musical, descended on the Lied for a two-night stint. Despite a few quirks, the small but talented cast drew the audience into a whirlwind of medieval fantasy, frolic and romance.

The play started off slowly, with the characters of King Arthur (James Warwick) and Merlyn (Peter Griffin) barely noticeable on stage. Warwick seemed to move stiffly, and his lines seemed forced.

However, he shaped up for the rest of the night, no doubt drawing upon his many years as a film and

stage actor.

In the opening scene, Arthur is plaguing Merlyn, his mentor, with questions about his bride-to-be, Guenevere.

"Will I love her?" Arthur asked.

"Love and marriage aren't the same thing," Merlyn answered. "Don't scramble them all up like that."

After Arthur spied on Guenevere warbling in the woods, falling out of a tree as he does so, he fell hopelessly in love. To convince Guenevere to stay in Camelot, Arthur ticked off the good points of the mystical land: It never rains 'til after sundown, by 8 a.m. the fog must disappear, by order summer lingers 'til September ... in Camelot.

Five years later, Arthur finally had an idea, and established the

Knights of the Round Table. Sir Lancelot du Lac of France answered the call and came to join Arthur and to be his right-hand man.

He entered with the hilarious "C'est Moi," but this Lancelot, played by Daniel Narducci, failed to capture the pure arrogance and conceit that this role deserved.

The funniest actor for this show was Chad Borden, in the role of Mordred. He played Arthur's evil illegitimate son with ease, singing "The Seven Deadly Virtues" in his squeaky tenor, often thrusting his hip at the audience.

But the best scenes by far were the crowd scenes, such as "The Lusty Month of May" and "The Jousts." The crowd seemed to make up for a droop in the main charac-

See CAMELOT on 10

Indian Center Gallery features Old West art

From Staff Reports

"Artists of the American West" will be at the Indian Center Gallery, 1100 Military Road, until Tuesday.

The exhibit features a collection of 48 hand-colored lithographs and wood engravings. The prints feature art of the American Old West from more than a hundred years ago.

The exhibit includes "Fort Pierre" by Karl Bodmer, "The Bear Dance" by George Catlin, "A Halt in the Yosemite Valley" by Albert Bierstadt and John J. Audubon's "American Beaver."

The exhibit was brought to

the Indian Center by Mid-America Arts Alliance, a Kansas City-based alliance that puts together national tours of traveling art exhibitions.

Mid-America Arts spokesman Loretta Evans said the Indian Center was showing the exhibit because it was a part of history dealing with the Old West.

"It's related to Native Americans and the military situation of that period," Evans said.

Touring since 1990, the exhibit has visited Wisconsin, Oklahoma and, most recently, California.