

'Marvin's Room' delights

Play shows hilarious portrait of family

BY BRET SCHULTE
Theater Critic

Theater



After receiving attention on both coasts — first as an off-Broadway sensation, and then in Hollywood as a critically acclaimed motion picture — "Marvin's Room" has moved to Lincoln.

Having premiered last Thursday, the show will run Thursday through Sunday at the Futz Theatre, 124 S. Ninth St.

For those who didn't make it to the New York staging, or who missed the quiet release of the movie, "Marvin's Room" is a hilarious and sad story of two sisters whose separate and lonely lives converge when one requires a bone marrow transplant.

The play catches up to Bessie, who has spent the last 20 years of her life caring for her bedridden father, Marvin, and an eccentric soap-opera junkie aunt, Ruth.

Bessie feels sick herself when she learns that she suffers from leukemia — the same disease that killed her mother — and sends for her younger sister, Lee, whose adolescent rebellion began a 20-year estrangement from the family.

While the frumpish Bessie devoted her life to her ailing family, the light-hearted Lee married a motorcycle-riding masochist whose abuse forced her to leave him, and raise her two boys on her own.

Now 17, Hank, the older boy, is in a "loony bin" (as the family calls it to show they have a sense of humor about the situation) for burning down the house. This forced Lee and

Charlie, the younger son, to move to a nearby convent where Charlie lives in a silent world of paperback novels, and Lee helps bake Communion hosts.

Hearing that Bessie needs a match for a bone marrow transplant, Lee pulls herself and her sons of their respective institutions to visit their long-estranged Florida relatives.

Despite the solemn plot, "Marvin's Room" is a play that causes embarrassingly loud outbursts of laughter while conveying the touching re-acquaintance of two opposites who happen to be sisters.

While the story does not promise rainbow endings, it is a true and realistic tale of the importance of family, and the humor and humanity inherent in even the most desperate circumstances.

Plays as poignant as "Marvin's Room" offer a veritable buffet for hungry acting talent, and once again Lincoln's underestimated acting community has brought an incredible and convincing performance to fellow residents and theater enthusiasts.

The highlight of this play by far is the elderly oddball Aunt Ruth — perfectly cast with Connie Dillow, Lincoln's very own Jessica Tandy. Playing a character who dresses up as a bridesmaid to celebrate a soap-opera wedding, and whose electrode-implanted brain periodically opens the garage door, Dillow is a constant laugh as she executes her character with comedic brilliance and spright-

ly energy.

Hank, the tortured young man who shirks from any human contact — physical or emotional — is played by Adam Michael Carr (with some help from James Dean). A striking stage presence, Carr creates a sullen character who provides an anchor of angst in a world of denial, humor and inconsistency. The young actor possesses enough insight into his character to know when not to look Lee in the eye, and how to have a tantrum without acting selfish.

Much of the play's charm comes from the unabashedly tacky Lee, an inspired hair dresser with a Jazzercise wardrobe and Bananarama facial. Actress Val Devoe embraces the role with a generous amount of anger and humor that succeeds in validating Lee as a misguided — although loving — mother trying to maintain a sense of sanity.

The Futz again has managed to pull off an amazing production with the absolute minimum of resources (at most, a bench and phone table grace the stage) and simultaneously maximize the audience's involvement.

The intimacy of the crowded Futz stage room amplifies the power of one of the decade's most endearing and honest portraits of the American family. And as long as it appears in that crowded room, "Marvin's Room" may be the biggest family room in town.

Tickets to the show are \$10.65, with performances running Thursday through Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 7:30 p.m. Call 435-6307 for more information.



MARYANN MUGGY/DN

MEMBERS OF CAROLYN'S MOTHER brought down the house at The Brass Rail Saturday. From left are Drew Hodgson, Rhett Lee and Colin T. Burke. Not pictured is Jeff Gust.

Carolyn's Mother heats up crowd

on chilly night with sizzling show

BY MARYANN MUGGY
Music Critic

Concert Review

I don't know what you were doing Saturday night, but if you weren't at The Brass Rail, you missed out on one incredible show.

The Denver-based band Carolyn's Mother sent an already frenzied crowd over the boiling point on this cold September night.

Carolyn's Mother took the stage about 11:30 p.m. and quickly proved why it has a small cult following in Colorado, Iowa and, now, Nebraska. About 20 people drove from Omaha just to see them.

The sound of Carolyn's Mother is hard to describe, but it is something that you will never forget. It has been called no heavier than Live and no lighter than the Cure, but that is only half of it. Each

of the four members is polished and, together, they create a package that fits together perfectly. Carolyn's Mother can seamlessly switch from hard-driving rock to softer sounds.

The lead singer, Rhett Lee, completely dominates the crowd with his stage presence and powerful voice. Throughout the night Lee often jumped from the stage and traveled through the crowd, much to the delight of the screaming fans. At one point, Lee even grabbed a ladder, climbed atop and crooned from his lofty heights. His voice was strong and clear and barreled across the crowd even though the batteries on his mike were going low.

Guitarist Drew Hodgson's playing is a wonderful companion to Lee's

voice. Hailing from Manchester, England, Hodgson adds a British twist to the music and helps make it stand out from other bands.

Bassist Colin T. Burke and drummer Jeff Gust complete the group and provide a solid backbone for the amazing band.

Together, they are Carolyn's Mother, a band quickly on its way to the top. If the following I mentioned earlier continues to grow at the rate it has been, soon everyone will know and never forget this incredible band.

If you happened to miss the show on Saturday night, don't worry. The group will soon be back. There is rumor of two shows in October.

Yes, it might be a little chilly to see live music outside, but I promise you will be warmed by the drive of that music.

Guest musician gives

clarinet personal feel

BY LIZA HOLTMEIER
Senior Reporter

Concert Preview

Denise Schmidt likens the clarinet to the human voice because of its versatility.

"The clarinet can ... have so many different tone colors," Schmidt explained. "To me, it is the instrument closest to the human voice."

Using this instrument, she said she hopes to relate her music to the audience of Kimball Recital Hall tonight. Schmidt will perform at 8 p.m. as a guest artist of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln School of Music.

Diane Cawein, a UNL professor of clarinet, is sponsoring the performance. Cawein met Schmidt at Florida State University, when Schmidt was one of the top FSU players and Cawein was an underclassman. Schmidt became a role model for Cawein, and they kept in close association after college.

Now, the two have guest-artist opportunities for each other. In exchange for Schmidt's performance tonight, Cawein will travel to the Southern Appalachian Clarinet Retreat in January as a guest of Schmidt.

Schmidt began playing the clarinet in seventh grade while growing up in Brandon, Fla. When it came

time to go to college, Schmidt chose FSU as her school and music as her major.

"There was nothing else I could do and be happy," Schmidt said.

The musician went on to finish her master's work at the University of Northern Texas — now called the University of North Texas. Currently, she teaches at Mars Hill College, in North Carolina, and performs with the Asheville Symphony and the Missouri Chamber Orchestra.

Cawein said some highlights of tonight's performance would include Leo Weiner's "Hungarian Dance," and work from the opera "La Traviata," by Giuseppe Verdi.

Schmidt also will perform works by A. Goedicke, Donato Lovreglio and Felix Mendelssohn. Cawein and pianists Nicole Narboni and Mark Clinton will accompany Schmidt.

Cawein describes Schmidt's playing as a very personal experience.

"She's a very musical player, and she has a lot of ideas within herself that she brings out with her playing," Cawein said. "When you listen to any musician, you don't want to come out saying, 'What a great clarinet player!' You want to come out thinking, 'Oh, what a great musician!'"

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