

One-man 'Travels' premieres

Theater

By JASON HARDY
Senior Reporter

Michael Lasswell acts like a man possessed. But don't worry, it's all a part of his job. Today at 1 p.m. Lasswell, a professional actor from New York, will do a one-man performance of Graham Greene's, "Travels With My Aunt," an award-winning play traditionally done by four actors.

Lasswell said he got the idea to do the play as a one-man performance while he was in New York.

"I was the understudy for the show in New York so I had to learn all the parts," Lasswell said. "I was at home visiting my parents, and they hadn't got to see me do it, so I performed all the parts."

He said the play mushroomed from there, and he has been touring the country in between acting jobs ever since.

Lasswell said the nature of the story helped the adaptation to a one-man play go fairly smooth.

"Because the book is narrated from one man's point of view it made sense to do it as a one-man show," Lasswell said.

The basic story follows an uppity middle-aged banker through adventures he takes with his crazy old aunt. Along the way they encounter numerous challenges and end up smuggling gold and covering up drug deals. Lasswell said the story is great fun.

"The bottom line is that it's just a ripping good story," Lasswell said. "It's kind of like the forces of Alfred Hitchcock crashing into the forces of Monty Python."

There are more than 20 characters in the play, and Lasswell does them all without cues or help. He said it is very physically draining.

"I ran the New York City marathon 10 years ago, and that was easier than doing this play alone," Lasswell said. "It's just completely terrifying, and I sweat like a pig."

Scary and challenging as it may be, Lasswell said this is, in a way, the purest form of theater because it gets back to the storytelling methods of theater's beginnings.

Lasswell said he developed most of the characters by taking characteristics from different people he saw in real life or on television. After doing the show so many times, he said, the characters took on a life of their own.

"They possess you in a way," Lasswell said. "I've done this show so often I almost don't even have any control over what I'm doing. The characters run the show now."

Kevin Paul Hofeditz, chairman of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln theater department, said Lasswell works well in this kind of format.

"He really has a wonderful sense of interpretation," Hofeditz said. "He's a fine actor and is really gifted in the one-person format."

He said seeing a one-man performance is a neat experience.

"It's not about trying to trick us into believing there's more than one person," Hofeditz said. "It's about seeing many people come out of one person."

He said he is confident Lasswell will win over the crowd with his performance.

"He's got a great deal of charm and presence, and he will definitely draw the audience into the story," Hofeditz said.

Lasswell, who went to school in England, said his worldly travels have helped him in preparing for this play.

And, he said, a lifetime of preparation was needed for this kind of show.

"This play has been done in the four-man version in every continent and 30 different countries," Lasswell said. "I'm the first one who's crazy enough to try to do it alone."

The play will be performed in Room 301 in the Temple building at 1 p.m. Admission is free.

business architecture and art

Final project combines architecture and art

By SARAH BAKER
Senior Reporter

Freedom of speech encompasses more than just words.

A group of UNL students are out to prove that today through architecture.

As part of the Artist Diversity Residency Program, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln brings in artists from other communities to add a new twist to classes.

This year, the program worked with the school of architecture, and after a semester of brainstorming, the final product of the class, "To Build or not to Speak," will be presented today at 11:45 a.m.

Architecture Professor Jennifer Watson, who is the instructor for the special course, said this is her second year of being involved with the project.

"This year the class, which consists of about nine students, looks at issues of exclusion and public space," Watson said.

At the conclusion of the course, Watson said, the students in the class put together a project that demonstrates what they discussed in class.

Watson described the final project as "personal structures."

She said the project is made up of mobile, vertical boxes that will eventually be joined together as one large structure on the UNL campus.

"All of these structures come together to form a space where people can exercise the right to speak out. They can be heard without being violated."

The event will take place at UNL this morning and continue throughout the lunch hour. It will be located just north of the Lied Center for Performing Arts in the greenspace.

Watson said much of the discussion in class focused on freedom of speech, public space and the process of language.

"Before we decided on what our project was going to be, we spent time doing readings and basically just brainstorming," Watson said.

Jeff Raz, an artist in residence who has worked with the class through the UNL Artist Diversity Residency Program, said getting everyone on the same level of communication was the first step.

"I speak theater,

while the class speaks architecture," Raz said. "We had to think alike and find the similarities."

Raz said the class did both theater and architecture activities when it was working on its final presentation.

"Hopefully when the structure is finished and sitting on campus, people will walk by and write on the walls or just help us push them together," he said. "Free speech is all part of the community, and we want to involve people."

"When Jeff got here, we made those ideas physical," Watson said. "The class learned more about performance and did things like using their bodies to create spaces."

"The students brought a new awareness to Jeff," she said.

At the end of the presentation, Raz said, the students will give short performances to express the idea of freedom of speech.

Watson said there are no plans to discuss any specific topics at the event.

"Students in the class are going to be speaking, and we are hoping the audience will have something that they are interested in talking about. We want it to be an informal soap-box setting."

Raz said he hopes to have a big turnout of students and faculty at the event.

"We want to explore the question of what exactly is freedom of speech?" he said. "We want to do this in an open and artistic way, because in the end, this is an art project."



MATT HANEY/DN

Mercy Rule's third release is best yet

Music

Mercy Rule
"The Flat Black Chronicles"
Caulfield Records
Grade: B

Mercy Rule's bassist, Heidi Ore, was eight months pregnant when she wrapped up work on the "The Flat Black Chronicles."

Since then, it's been two years of fatigue and exhausted patience - and that's just with the music industry.

Perhaps Lincoln's favorite local group, comprised of Ore, her husband Jon Taylor and drummer Ron Albertson, Mercy Rule has finally released its third full album, "The Flat Black Chronicles," four years after it first started work on it.

The band's persistence,

which carried them to three record companies, paid off.

By far the band's most experimental and artistic album to date, "The Flat Black Chronicles" relays the story of a maturing band refusing to act its age.

Produced by Lou Giordano, acclaimed for his work with Bob Mould, "Chronicles" launches the band out of its signature three-piece sound with the help of 10 additional musicians.



MERCY RULE'S lineup includes (from left to right) Jon Taylor, Heidi Ore and Ron Albertson.

Saxophone, trumpet, accordion, piano and even a tambourine man joined forces with the guitar and vocal powerhouse to create Mercy Rule's most memorable album to date.

But Mercy Rule still steals the show. Ore always has been able to out-sing whatever opposes her onstage, but her husband/guitarist and drummer never stop trying. Unfortunately, this zeal leaves you wondering why they even invited

the guest musicians.

Several of the tracks incorporate beautiful accompaniment by orchestral instruments, but it only serves as a wallpaper for the bold

strokes of the band.

In typical Mercy Rule style, Ore plunges deep into sensitive tales of need, love and companionship. But she also tackles new ground, taking aim at the music industry that delayed the creating of the new album.

"KSUK" derides commercial radio, particularly the laughable "alternative" scene, and "Underwhelmed" is a driving plea for originality and authenticity.

"The Flat Black Chronicles" continues where 1994's "Providence" left off by diversifying the group's power-wall of sound and clueing listeners in to the inside of the commercial music industry.

Despite all the fancy trimmings and extras on this commercially produced album, the three-piece core of Mercy Rule still leaves the deepest impression.

- Bret Schulte