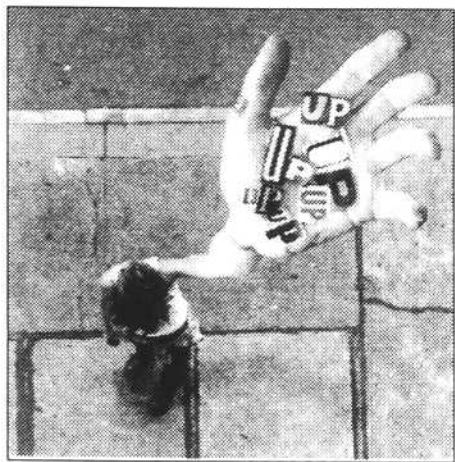


New Releases



Ani DiFranco
"Up Up Up Up Up Up"
 Righteous Babe Music
 Grade: A-

Ani DiFranco has never been one for extravagance, and on her latest album, she gets back to the basics.

On "Up Up Up Up Up Up," DiFranco returns to simple story-telling, edgy social commentary and a streamlined band.

DiFranco recorded the new album just months after her last, "Little Plastic Castle." A testimony to the singer-songwriter's commitment to release an album a year, "Up" serves as a documentary of DiFranco's most recent artistic development.

With increasing media attention and the growth of her record company, Righteous Babe Records, it's no surprise that 1998 was a good year for DiFranco. Her album reflects those experiences with its more mellow soul.

Fans should not misread mellow as an accusation that DiFranco has lost her edge. Quite the opposite. DiFranco is just as spunky and brazen as ever. But "Up" features a more mature DiFranco, one more hopeful even in her resignation. DiFranco is still full of passion and zeal for her causes, but this time she's more reflective and less accusatory.

The new album also features a funkier sound with the addition of Julie Wolf on organ and piano.

The album opens with "Tis of Thee," a typical DiFranco tune with a plucky, melancolic tone. The song comments on the racist effects of the asinine "War On Drugs." With characteristic sarcasm, DiFranco remarks on the empty promises of Get-Tough-On-Crime policies above subdued guitar and drum lines.

DiFranco continues with "Virtue," a song that capitalizes on her ability to go from house-rocking folk to quiet melody. DiFranco contrasts her anti-strum guitar playing with sweet, smooth interludes, and her self-acceptance on this song is both comforting and provocative.

Another highlight is "Come Away From It," an 8½-minute ditty about loving a drug addict. The addition of a haunting organ line behind DiFranco's mournful accusations creates a surreal and religious effect.

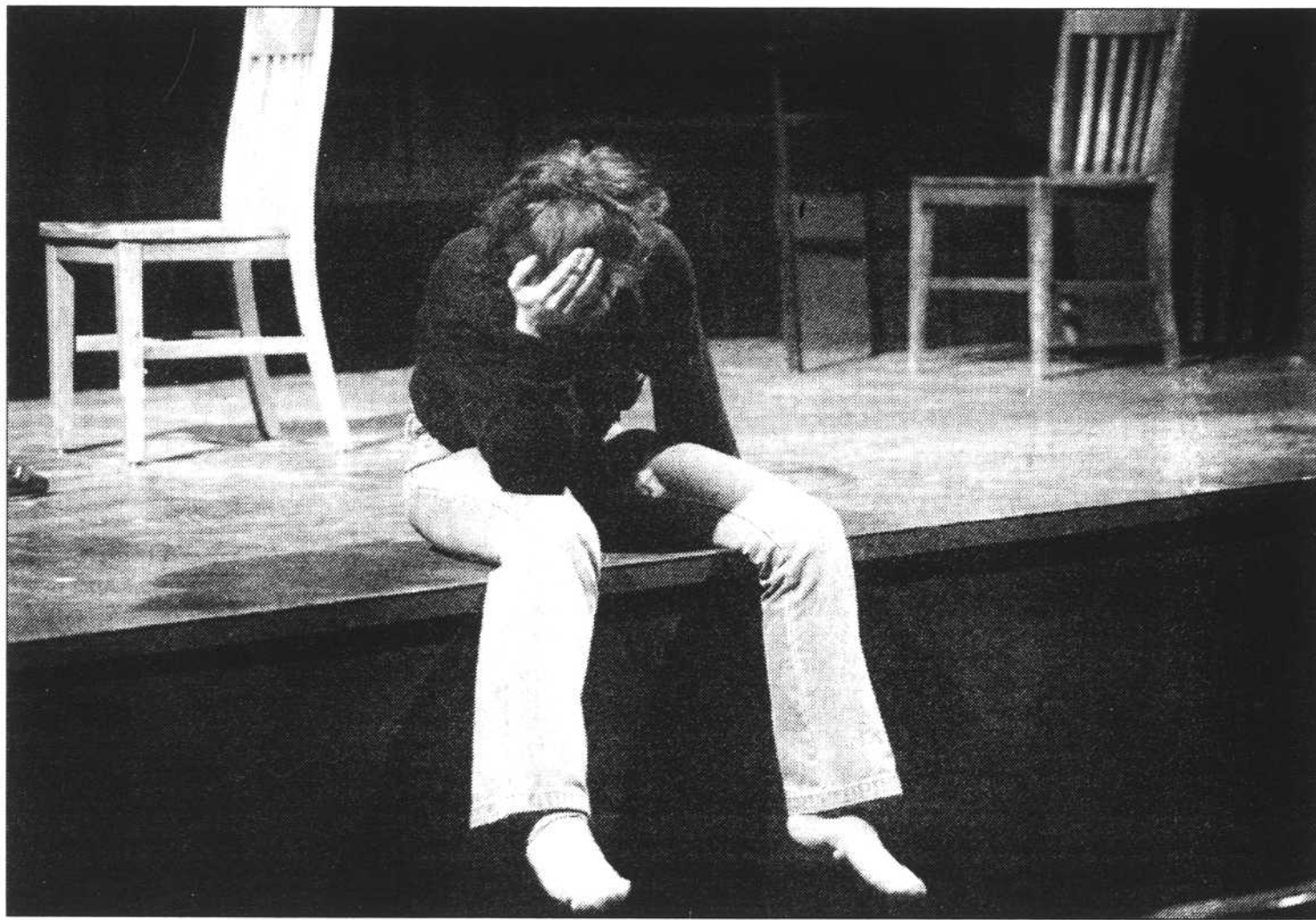
DiFranco contrasts the irate melancholy of "Come Away From It" with the spunky independence of "Angry Anymore." With its light-hearted banjo and strapping accordion, the song provides a glimpse into DiFranco's new attitude: Self-righteousness won't get you anywhere.

The final highlight of the album is "Everest," a song that recreates the intimacy of seeing DiFranco live. Featuring only guitar, bass and vocals, the song allows DiFranco to overpower the listener with the emotional intensity of her voice.

A few songs may remind listeners of the effect-laden "Dilate." Occasionally the experimentation overpowers the vocals, but DiFranco is still interested in music more than toys and gadgets. Most of the improvisation is done in the same spirit and humor of her concert performances.

And despite the lavish use of the word "Up" in its title, this album is DiFranco at her most succinct.

-Liza Holtmeier



AMY JIRSA PERFORMS her monologue from "Spiked Heels" at Howell Theater Monday night. Jirsa and other theater students will be competing in Ames, Iowa, on Thursday.

RYAN SODERLIN/DN

Cast sets stage for competition

BY LIZA HOLTMEIER
 Senior staff writer

For the first time in years, the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance is sending a show to the Region Five competition of the American College Theatre Festival.

This Saturday, the cast of "Picasso at the Lapin Agile" will perform in Ames, Iowa, at Iowa State University. The cast will join other UNL theater students competing solo and as duets in the Irene Ryan Scholarship Competition, which is conducted simultaneously with the Theatre Festival.

Students performed "Picasso at the Lapin Agile" last semester during the department's main stage season at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The show was chosen for the festival after an adjudicator judged the show in October.

Five other colleges will present plays during the regional festival between Thursday and Saturday. The UNL production is one of two versions of "Picasso at the Lapin Agile"

being performed.

The top play from Region Five will appear in a showcase representing college theater at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., in April.

Written by Steve Martin, "Picasso at the Lapin Agile" places Albert Einstein and Pablo Picasso in a Parisian cafe in 1904. The play explores what might have happened if the two young geniuses had met.

Cast members have made a few changes since the show ended its run at UNL in November. After the adjudicator saw the show, he made recommendations concerning the production's technical elements such as sight lines and vocal productions.

The show also changed after the students took a short break from the play between semesters.

"There is a freshness to each character," said Jude Hickey, one of the play's cast members. "I think before, the show was a lot about being really funny. Now it's about having fun and searching for what

each character wants."

Ryan Johnston, who plays Picasso, said the show has entered the next phase in its life cycle.

"You can't possibly make it the same," Johnston said. "It's sort of picking up where you left off and letting the show continue to grow. For

"It's kind of like in football when they make a big deal out of changing to Astroturf from grass."

RYAN JOHNSTON
 cast member

us, it's an opening night. It's not like the show's over and now we're doing it again."

The actors have also been preparing to perform on a stage and in a venue larger than the Lied Center. Taking the show from the Howell Theatre, which seats 382,

required some set modifications. However, cast members said, the only acting changes they have made involve bigger gestures and reactions.

"It's really hard to prepare for a space that you've never been in," Johnston said. However, "It doesn't change the essentials or fundamentals of what you do. It's kind of like in football when they make a big deal out of changing to Astroturf from grass."

The students had their final rehearsal in Lincoln on Monday. Before they perform on Saturday, they will have four hours to set up the set and run a final dress rehearsal.

While students are looking forward to the performance, many say the highlight will be seeing the other schools perform.

"The best part of the whole festival is a chance to meet a lot of other theater artists, see what they are doing and talk about the art," Johnston said.

Everything's rosy for UNL professor

BY DANELL MCCOY
 Staff writer

Inspired by a floral bouquet he received after the birth of his son in 1997, Eddie Dominguez created a dinnerware set that has made him the dish of UNL's art scene.

The piece, titled "Anton's Flowers," was purchased by the Renwick Gallery of the National Museum of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., in December.

Dominguez's piece was valued at \$10,000 and was bought by the Smithsonian for \$9,500. Dominguez, an assistant professor of ceramics at University of Nebraska-Lincoln, says the piece was made as a tribute to his son's

birth. "The flowers were given to me by my art dealer who I had worked with in Santa Fe for 15 years," Dominguez said. "I had a show coming up not long after my son was born and wanted to use these pieces. It was very inspired artwork."

The piece consists of a set of dishes, each one focused on a different view of the flower arrangement. When the pieces are stacked together, they form a garden.

Dominguez is the second UNL faculty member in the department to have work purchased by the Smithsonian. The first was a piece titled "Star Standing, Air Wheeling, Dust Deviling" by Karen Kuncing in 1989. A second piece of her work was later donated to the museum.

Dominguez decided on serving

utensils as his medium of choice because he believes that celebrating a meal together is an important part of daily life. When his son was born, he wanted to portray that family-oriented outlook.

Dominguez was very surprised when he received the call asking him to send some slides of his work to the museum. The slides were shown to a committee, and a few months later the artwork itself was taken to the museum to be viewed.

It took almost a year for the committee to select Dominguez's pieces.

"It wasn't easy letting it go," Dominguez said. "But because it went there it's okay."

When Dominguez began working on this piece, he brought actual flowers into his studio to use for his

designs, which he usually does not do.

"I've always been inspired by nature," Dominguez said. "But I don't usually take nature into the studio with me."

Gail Kendell, an associate professor of art at UNL, acknowledges the accomplishments of Dominguez and believes that his recognition, as well as the recognition others in the department have received, will enhance the prestige of the art department.

"Our program is gaining a lot of recognition nationally," Kendell said, "particularly in the area of graduate education."

Dominguez says he plans on putting the money back into his studio. But first, he hopes to buy his son a new bedroom set.