

'6 x 12' presents array of artists

BY DIANE BRODERICK
Staff writer

While most people measure "6 x 12" in inches or feet, the Wagon Train Project has its own take on the subject.

In a community performance series that begins this weekend titled "6 x 12," the local venue will present six local acts for 12 minutes each.

The presentation is an opportunity to give up-and-coming Lincoln artists a chance to reach a diverse audience, said Serena Reeves, Wagon Train publicity manager.

The idea was spawned through Wagon Train Director Amy Lamphere's travels. She found art groups that sponsored events in which anyone could get up on stage for 10 minutes to perform anything they wanted.

This concept ties in with the difficulty artists encounter when they are beginning their careers, Reeves said.

"If you're new and starting out, you don't have a following. ... It's hard to get publicity," Reeves said.

Ed Rumbagh, a member of avant-garde performance quartet Howlooseanation, which will be performing an original composition this weekend, said the show will provide several opportunities for artists.

One of the show's strengths lies in the fact that the artists, who usually have to rent a space to perform, won't have to pay to be seen, Rumbagh said. This makes it easier for them to try out experimental works that in many cases they might not be able to afford.

And the diversity of performers is something Wagon Train planners strove for, Reeves said.

This weekend's performers include Howlooseanation; Sabor Mexicano, a children's ethnic dance group; Baby Needs Shoes, an a capella trio; Heather Crichfield, a stand-up comic; Joel Herrera, guitarist and vocalist; and Amy Williams, vocalist and instrumentalist.

"Amy (Lamphere) and I are trying

Theatre Preview The Facts

What: "6 X 12"
Where: The Wagon Train Project, 512 S. Seventh St. Suite 200
When: Friday and Saturday at 7:30 pm
Cost: \$6 at the door
The Skinny: Local artists get 12 minutes each in the spotlight

to make it a variety showcase so that we don't choose all of the dance for one performance and all of the vocal for one night," Reeves said.

This technique could end up broadening audiences' perspectives, she said. Some art-lovers tend to ignore some aspects of the performance world and concentrate on their favorite sections.

"In the process (of seeing '6 x 12'), they'll discover maybe they do like modern dance or maybe they do like instrumental music," Reeves said.

Laurie Lessman, a member of Baby Needs Shoes, said "6 x 12" provides her group a new type of exposure in Lincoln.

"Depending on the groups that are performing, we're all going to bring in our following," Lessman said.

The group will be performing one original work, a Celtic song and several songs from the 1930s and '40s. Lessman said the 12-minute time limit was an interesting challenge.

"It gives us a chance to show what we can do in 12 minutes," she said.

Sabor Mexicano coordinator Dana Rodrigues said because of the time constraints, the dance group will not make its usual costume changes, but will rotate dancers in and out instead.

"6 x 12" will proceed with shows in April, May and June, and is tentatively slated to continue in the fall.

The series' presence in Lincoln provides a needed outlet for its artists, Rumbagh said.

"It's a real opportunity for entertaining people in Lincoln to get in front of a group and do something."

Acting saves the day in formulaic 'Analyze This'

■ Billy Crystal and Robert De Niro make a good team in Harold Ramis' gangster comedy.

BY SAM MCKEWON
Senior editor

There's two kinds of funny in the movie business. Well, there's plenty of different types, but really, comedies fall into two categories.

One is the purely original genius of a film such as "Rushmore," a fresh collaboration of nuances and brilliant dialogue that passes for everyday life. This is a rare film.

Then there's the comedic formula. And make no mistake, "Analyze This" is a formula film. It has a predictable plot, a trading-places sort of scene, an unbelievable ending and stereotypes galore.

But here, it works. And "Analyze This" works primarily because of Robert De Niro, with a little help from Billy Crystal.

De Niro plays a gangster, Paul Vitti, who's about to have the most important business meeting of his life with heads of all the crime families right about the time he's having a mid-life crisis. He's got stress, he's got it bad and he goes to psychiatrist Ben Sobel (Crystal) to help straighten him out before the big sit-down.

Now, the movie could have taken on a ridiculous, cartoonish tone by making De Niro's character a lovable brute who's really not that bad. Instead, he's loud, crude, unfaithful, set in his ways and, ultimately, an all-around irritating guy.

The key is that De Niro satirizes his character by making him emotionally unstable, a basic change from almost every gangster role he's ever inherited, specifically the one in the "The Godfather, Part II." There's even a reference in the film to the first "Godfather"



COURTESY PHOTO
PAUL VITTI (Robert De Niro) and Dr. Ben Sobel (Billy Crystal) star in the comedy "Analyze This" as a gangster working through issues with his psychiatrist.

movie.

Throughout, De Niro and Crystal are given enough banter to allow their characters to grow as people. We see Vitti as needy, as he follows Sobel to Florida, where he's to be married to a TV anchorwoman (Lisa Kudrow). We see Sobel as sympathetic and slightly excited to have a patient who talks about more than his sexual habits (though this is touched on as well).

Surprisingly enough, director Harold Ramis ("Groundhog Day") manages to bring these characters enough humanity to make us not care about the foolish plot behind the film. There is a genuine problem Vitti has about his father, and this serves as a central issue of the film.

As always, De Niro's a pro, and he's good here in a role that demands him to be comedic and believable at the same time. The key here is his performance, and De Niro can pull off comedy with

the best of them.

Keeping the leash on Crystal was a good idea. He's always better as the straight man, and there's little question that Crystal is not the star of this film. Give him credit for not trying to steal scenes from De Niro while together, waiting to get his big laughs in solo scenes and the end of the movie.

The supporting cast is solid, especially Joe Viterelli as Vitti's right-hand man, Jelly. He could have been a dimwit friend; instead he's part of the conscience of the film. Kudrow does what she can in a small role. Kyle Sabihy is funny as Crystal's son.

The joke turns tired toward the end of the film, with the finale being a little over the top. But De Niro and Crystal sustain their energy to the end.

"Analyze This" shows how a formula comedy can be done right. It helps to have a Robert De Niro on board to do it, though.

Roots' new album a hip-hop hit

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Ursula Rucker.

The band needs no DJ, because Rahzel, who is also referred to as the "Godfather of Noyze," is able to make record-scratching and beat sounds with his throat and mouth. The verbal percussionist Rahzel is currently being featured in commercials for MTV's Hip-Hop Week.

The Roots also include the underappreciated rappers Black Thought and Malik B, bassist Leonard Hubbard, keyboardist Kamal and drummer Questlove.

The group doesn't end with those six members, however. The Roots are an extended family.

"We're like Wu-Tang (Clan)," Rahzel said. "Our group is spread out all over the country. When Malik B decided he didn't want to tour, someone else filled in. We're a corporation."

Such claims are apparent on "Things Fall Apart," where Dice Raw and Common return to The Roots' record. They, along with Mos Def, DJ Jazzy Jeff, Scratch and the poet Rucker, are unofficial members of The Roots community.

Nevertheless, the best guest appearance on "Things Fall Apart" is courtesy of Erykah Badu, who sings on the soulful "You Got Me." The song features a catchy chorus by Badu, some slick rhyming by Black Thought and closes out with some skillful drumming by the talented

Questlove.

"Things Fall Apart," though, is best when the original group members are on board.

Rahzel's greatest moment is for the song "100% Dundee," where he drops the beats coupled with the harmony of keyboardist Kamal. With Black Thought and Malik B rhyming over the Rahzel-fueled beats, "100% Dundee" is one of the best songs here.

Other standouts are old-school MC-flavored "Double Trouble," the lively "The Next Movement" and the bass-happy "Dynamite!" All songs have street appeal with sing-along rhymes.

Although "Things Fall Apart" has just been released, Rahzel fans can look forward to his first solo album, "Fifth Element: Make the Music 2000," which is due out in May.

Rahzel describes the solo album as a mix of Inspector Gadget, James Bond and old Atari games. Needless to say, it should be interesting.

With Rahzel finishing his solo album, the Roots are venturing on the road in support of "Things Fall Apart." With this recording, they've solidified themselves in rap history along with the similar A Tribe Called Quest and Run-DMC. Still, The Roots are carving their own niche.

"We vibe on the same music," he said. "It's a good association, but we do what we do. We bring a whole different element into hip-hop."

Poet to read at Nebraska Union

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and a sincere adoration for literary history.

Cute references to Byron, Marco Polo and Dickens add cultural weight to the frame of his irreverent near-epic poem "Travel Notes."

Written in a length to rival Whitman's vivid tomes, Goldbarth's latticework of trans-generational imagery summons a host of characters and settings to play upon bizarre circumstances.

In a very Bradbury scene, investigations of the Martian language are conducted with amusing sincerity.

— with a beast, a "pet," with the "head of a cabbage" and one great eye in the middle, like a peacock feather that moves on paws —
"These words when pronounced express definite ideas."

Today Goldbarth will be reading this poem and others from "Troubled Lovers in History," published this year by Ohio State University Press.

A Jewish American raised in Chicago, Goldbarth extracts many of his personal experiences for use in his writing. His poetry has been hailed by muses such as Joyce Carol Oates, who described him as "a dazzling virtuoso who can break your heart."

Literature Preview The Facts

What: Albert Goldbarth reading
Where: Georgian Room, Nebraska Union
When: Tonight at 7:00
Cost: Free
The Skinny: Post-Modern poet howls at UNL

Today marks his first reading at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, which brought him here through sponsorships by the Department of English and the Judaic Studies Department.

Culling messages from Marvel comic books, B-movies and obscure Greek Classicism, Goldbarth's writing is a postmodern force in the current literary world and one that, up until today, has only been experienced at UNL in the classroom.

Bauer said her poetry students have always responded enthusiastically to Goldbarth's poems.

"A lot of them believe he sounds different from other poetry," she said.

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