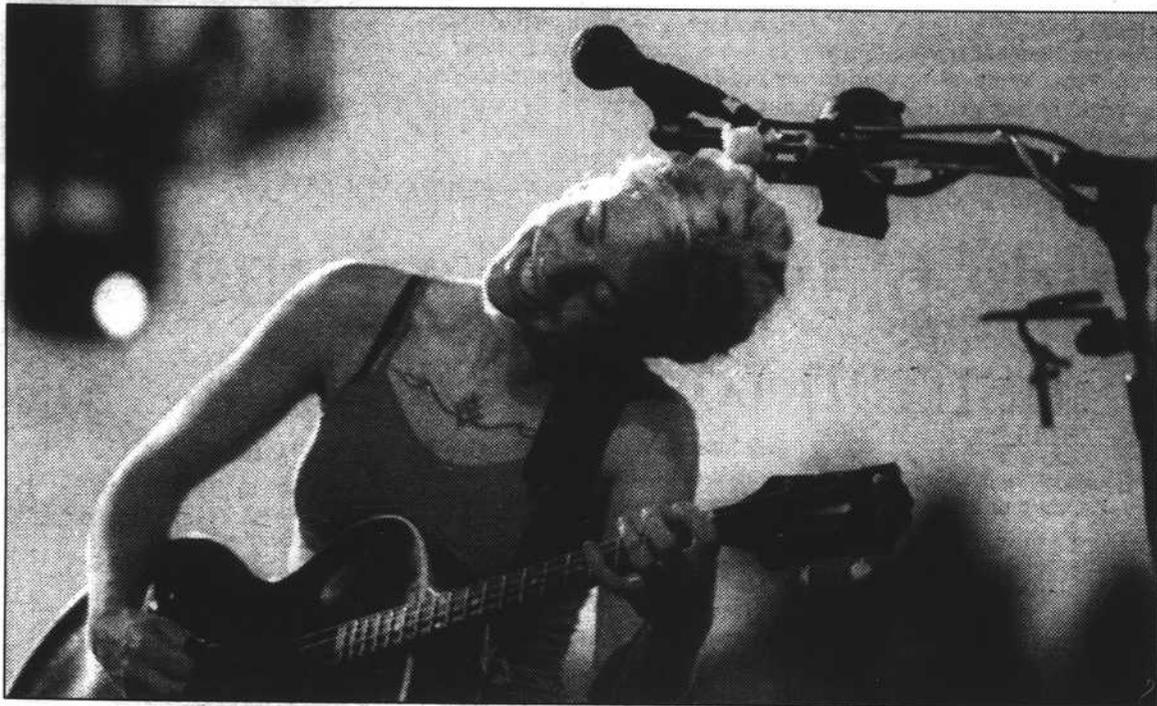


Can't fake the folk



Photos by Rick Townley/DN
ANI DIFRANCO, a self-made music giant, rocked the Ranch Bowl's sand volleyball courts last Friday when she brought her "F-Word Tour" to Omaha. DiFranco played a two-hour set to a near-capacity crowd and was joined on stage by members of Maceo Parker's band, including the living legend of saxophone himself.



Omaha playwright looks at dark side of humanity

By **BROCK WENDLANDT**
Staff writer

The process of completely opening oneself and facing what is most deeply rooted in the heart's desire can be one of the most unnerving encounters in the human experience.

What can be even more brutal than this honesty is the possibility of achieving this moment of clarity while in the presence of loved ones.

In his play, "Something Is Wrong", Bob Vivian brings together a middle-class family on a vacation in Northern Michigan to uncover these secrets that people hold closest to themselves.

"It is a bizarre, strange and twisted play," said Vivian, the 32 year-old Omaha playwright and English graduate student/teacher at UNL.

"I want to raise a deeper sense of questioning with this play. I want to ask, 'If one makes it in American culture - what then?' Where does a person's human obligation end?"

Vivian, who has had 20 of his plays produced in New York, will run "Something Is Wrong" at Creighton University's Lied Center for the Performing Arts, July 8-25, Thursday through Sunday nights at 8 p.m.

The play, Vivian said, will offer the

audience a lens to view a variety of topics. It involves such issues as consumerism, moral responsibility and human isolation, but it centers on a family's ability to communicate with each other what is most deeply real in each individual's life.

"All the characters seem to be in a dark place where they are truly desperate to find something meaningful," said Phyllis Doughman, who plays Louis in the play. "Most of the audience will be able to identify with at least one of the characters."

Allowing people to relate to characters, Vivian said, is what makes theater a communal experience where people can analyze their own thoughts.

"I always try to tap into the mystery of being a human being," he said, "and this, as it does in 'Something Is Wrong', can take an infinite variety of forms."

Vivian's wife, Kay, who plays Elaine Joy, attested to the inquisitive nature of her husband's work.

"Bob's work is amazing," she said. "It deals with the way people live superficially, but then it digs deeper to question humanity."

Vivian said his own life has mirrored this search for diversity in mankind.

He described his upbringing in

Omaha as a very conventional and loving one, but also as a very sheltered one. He found that this often shielded him from a lot of human reality.

"It was wonderful to grow up safe," he said, "but I feel that my limited experiences kept me too far away from anything raw or deeply real. Everything was at a distance and seemed sanitized."

Vivian sought out to find what he was not able to in his confined world. The result has been a body of work that includes his plays, but also includes essay writing and poetry that have been published or are forthcoming in New York Quarterly, Creative Nonfiction, Salt Hill and the Onset Review.

"In my work and teaching," he said, "I try to depict the incredible, diverse and valid world that surrounds us."

He added that his goals as a playwright are "simple, but yet difficult."

"I want to get better as a writer, write from a pure place, write for other reasons than money and write for history - instead of writing for what's popular now," he said.

"I would really like to emulate the masters, (Anton) Chekov and (Samuel) Beckett, and write works that will become apart of the culture in a meaningful and deep way."

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