

DEAD Again

Cemetery buries traditional 'Hamlet' in live performance

BY SHARON KOLBET

When it opened its doors Friday evening, the Swan Theater became the area's newest dramatic venue.

The unusual setting within the gates of Wyuka Funeral Home & Cemetery, 3600 O St., makes the playhouse certain to get theatergoers' attention.

As part of a broad renovation project for the cemetery, the Wyuka Historical Society decided to bring theater to the funeral home's empty carriage house.

Accepting the challenge of converting a former horse stable into a playhouse, Nebraska Wesleyan University graduate Suzanne Evans is directing the production of Tom Stoppard's "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead."

The play's last performances are Friday at 7 p.m. and Saturday at 2 and 7 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for students.

The dark comedy focuses on two minor characters found in Shakespeare's "Hamlet." With a story line familiar to those who know Shakespeare's classic tale, "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead" puts a modern twist on the well-known plot.

While some Lincoln residents may have questioned the appropriateness of theater within a cemetery, the performers at the Swan Theater work hard to put people at ease.

"We are very respectful of the space," said actor Vince Learned.

Learned has the role of the Player, the leader of a troupe of down-on-their-luck thespians. In keeping with Shakespeare's idea of a "play with a play," these actors attempt to win the favor of the troubled Hamlet and end up confounding the hapless Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

With a sand floor and open-air seating, the layout of the carriage house lends itself well to an Elizabethan-style production. The carriage house architecture allows actors to climb up ladders and over balconies, utilizing all areas of the historic building.

"The space is really different," said Gregory Peters, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln graduate who plays Rosencrantz. "It is classic and experimental at the same time. It comes ready-made with all kinds of levels, entrances and exits."

Lawrence Mota, who plays Guildenstern, said the cast members were respectful of their location.

"What we do, we do with the utmost respect for the space," Mota said. "Theater is an art whose strength derives from its rituals; it seems only appropriate that we perform it in a place connected with last rites."



Photos by Sharon Kolbet/DN

TOP: Speaking as the Player, Vince Learned leans out from the carriage-house balcony. Using an Elizabethan-styled stage, the cast of "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead" moves in and around the historic building in Wyuka cemetery.

LEFT: Larry Mota and Gregory Peters perform as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in the Swan Theater production of "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead." The play is being presented at the historic carriage house in the Wyuka cemetery, 3900 O St., this weekend.

RIGHT: Hamlet's soliloquy to Yorick takes on a modern twist in the Swan Theater's production of "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead."

Performance Preview

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead

Where: Swan Theater
Wyuka Cemetery
Carriage House

When: Friday @ 7 p.m.
Saturday @ 2 p.m.
& 7 p.m.

Cost: \$10 adults
\$5 students

Murky movie marks Stallone return

■ A poorly directed search for truth in a murder leaves 'Get Carter' with unrelated subplots and incoherent threads.

BY SAMUEL MCKEWN

Sylvester Stallone dropped off the movie radar screen for three years — not by choice, but Hollywood banishment, Stallone once bemoaned to the New York Post after his so-so "Copland," a loaded film that apparently re-established his acting chops.

Woe is Sly — three years in dark country, and his newest endeavor, "Get Carter," on top of being a steaming pile of genuinely odd performances and readily incoherent plot threads, is one of the darkest pictures ever made.

It's as if the director, Stephen T. Kay, wanted to pass on the effects of half blindness to the movie-going public.

Consider one scene where Stallone's Jack Carter, a Las Vegas headbanger who returns home to Seattle to investigate his brother's murder. He asks an old enemy (Mickey Rourke, another has-been) to take off the yellow neon sunglasses "to get a good look at him."

Maybe Carter does. Maybe he doesn't. Kay has drained so much color from the scene that we don't see Rourke's eyes. The murkiness generally sums up the entire experience of watching "Get Carter."

It holds the cards against its vest for so long, you'll have left the theater either in confusion or in certainty nothing more was about to occur.

It's quite a switch from the original, English version of the film, a 1971 cult hit of sorts that starred Michael Caine, who plays a small role here.

Funny, as Caine was shooting the worst disaster

movie in history, "Jaws 4," after winning his first Academy Award for "Hannah and Her Sisters," he was shooting "Get Carter" in the midst of winning for "The Cider House Rules."

The man knows how to make an encore.

Caine's Jack Carter was a oily brute bent on revenge for the sake of revenge — the very notion of partaking in loutish beatings appealed to the character, and it appealed to audiences. Taut, wiry B-movie scripts usually do. I'm not sure what David McKenna's script could be called. "Taut" and "wiry" fail to come to mind.

Carter returns to Seattle, stocked with smokes, a grubby goatee and a stash of Vegas glimmer suits that apparently retard the rain that falls in scene after scene.

As he returns, he seems certain of foul play, though both his brother's wife (Miranda Richardson) and daughter (Rachel Leigh Cook) would prefer to let slimy dogs lie.

Carter has a guilt complex for disappearing on his bro, though.

He finds himself bent on beating the truth out of his victims or threatening "to take it to the next level," a flurry of fists and facial contortions only a "yo" man like Rocky could love.

The "level" scenes, as it were, feel rather obligatory, especially one where a villain takes Carter to another level, after which Carter responds with a whole new level all his own. It's quite a spectacle to behold, this grunting one-upmanship of flabby-skinned ex-stars.

Just what was Carter's brother embroiled in? A quarter to anyone who can guess that in the first hour.

It has something to do with a bar, a computer-porn mogul (Alan Cumming, conjuring up Pee-Wee Herman's ghost), a seedy hooker, Rourke's character,

Caine's character, a courier whose name we never learn, and two goons from Carter's Las Vegas gig.

The goons show up to bust Carter's chops in an unrelated, entirely useless subplot.

To Stallone's credit, he seems as genuinely lost in the movie as the audience will be, and his scene with Cook, off the radar since "She's All That," borders on dramatic sincerity.

All other performances are lost in the stew of speed-up camera tricks, freeze frames of Carter and double-screen fun. Lord knows what Miranda Richardson, a classic and subtle actress, is doing in this.

That'd be a good question to ask Stallone. He knows enough about writing scripts that he surely must have spotted this turkey. Maybe he figured that if Kay made "Get Carter" dark enough, the flaws would wash away. If only he didn't own the Vegas shimmer suits...

Note: "Get Carter" wasn't screened for critics; the New Line marketing clan knew better than to let all the mainstream pundits make kabobs of it.

MOVIE REVIEW

Get Carter

Director: Stephen T. Kay

Stars: Sylvester Stallone, Mickey Rourke, Michael Caine, Rachel Leigh Cook

Rating: R (language, violence that has been "taken to another level")

★ of 4 stars

Dropped Notes

Hard life knocks blues into singer's rock-swing

"Just dial trouble; I'll say 'Hello,'" blues diva Candy Kane sings on the opening track of her newest album, "The Toughest Girl Alive."

The single mom found herself on welfare in East Los Angeles at 16-years-old and has since attained other killer attributes: battered wife, porn star, bisexual, blues singer and plus-size woman that's "200 pounds of fun," as she proudly describes.

Kane has all the makings of a true and raw diva. In fact, she may be considered the diva of all modern divas; she will be playing tonight at the Zoo Bar.

The singer began writing poetry as a child and wrote her first song at 16. As a struggling single mother, Kane turned to topless modeling and stripping for money.

Unlike many, she proudly embraces her past as the force that has allowed her to develop her music career.

At 35, Kane's voice is reminiscent of the blues of Bessie Smith and the oomph of Etta James. Kane's personal heroes include Etta James, Koko Taylor and Dave Alvin.

Kane's sound is packed with blues-rock-swing that borders on the naughty.

In performances, audiences are promised loads of dramatics to enhance the whole spectacle of the show — as if she needed help. Kane has been known for playing the piano with her breasts. She makes it clear that "every song has its own life."

Kane will perform at Lincoln's internationally known Zoo Bar, 136 N. 14th St. The show starts around 9 p.m., and there is an \$8 cover charge.

Compiled by Emily Pyeatt