

Morath brings brand of 'Ragtime'

After a successful run at the Lied Center, the one-man show will explore history.

BY BILLY SMUCK

Those who enjoyed the Broadway musical "Ragtime," featured at the Lied Center earlier this semester, are not going to want to miss "The Ragtime Man" Max Morath this evening at Kimball Hall.

Morath's one-man performance, scheduled for Wednesday, March 21 at 7:30 p.m., will be more than entertaining; it will be educational.

Morath isn't only a pianist and singer, he is also a historian and scholar of the Ragtime era.

As entertainer and spokesman for American history and music, Morath takes on a large responsibility.

Early in his career, Morath's "Turn of the Century" theatrical sparked the ragtime revival of the 1970s, playing in New York for a year and then touring nationally.

Morath followed up with other successful shows such as "The Ragtime Years" and "Living a Ragtime Life."

A native of Colorado Springs, Colo., Morath graduated from Colorado College with a degree in English, working his way through school as a radio announcer and jazz sideman.

Morath later worked a variety of jobs such as actor, writer, salesman, pianist and television director.

His fascination with ragtime music and its history didn't begin until he started performing in melodrama theaters.

Morath uses his music to peek into and explore the history of America.

"I've never been able to separate the music and theater from the rest of our culture," Morath said. "I'm as fascinated by Thomas Edison and Teddy Roosevelt as I am by Irving Berlin and Scott Joplin. I've been trying to get them together for years."

Currently, Morath is very busy as a writer with his essay "Ragtime Then and Now," which appears in the book "Jazz: A Reader's Companion."

Along with his wife, who is a photographer, Morath recently published "The Road to Ragtime," a depiction of his career entertaining in America.

Morath has also done some broadcasting recently on National Public Radio and has done a couple PBS specials.

Executive Director of the Lied Center Charles Bethea said Morath is very enthusiastic and articulate about his work.

Bethea said that after seeing Morath perform, he was eager to bring him to Lincoln.

"He's entertaining and a lot of fun," Bethea said. "He enjoys what he's doing so much, he makes the audience enjoy it with him."

Oscars more open than they seem

BY SAMUEL MCKEON AND SEAN MCCARTHY

One award. Two different opinions. That's how we present this year's Academy Award predictions, a collection of awards that already have favorites in line for the major category. For some reason, those predictions don't seem to be on strong footing. This is no "Titanic" year; although "Gladiator" has 12 nominations, it isn't likely it will win more than four or five.

Without adieu ... the list. Past winners are underlined in the acting categories, with past nominees bolded.

Best Actor

- Javier Bardem - "Before Night Falls"
- Russell Crowe - "Gladiator"
- Tom Hanks** - "Cast Away"
- Ed Harris - "Pollock"
- Geoffrey Rush** - "Quills"

Sam Says: Crowe, on the strength of *Gladiator* as a whole, is the favorite. But ... something says no. Acting awards have always had their quirks (see Jessica Lange's win for "Blue Sky"). Hanks was magnificent, but I like Harris, twice-nominated and starring in a role as Jackson Pollock that most of the Academy voters will see and like.

Sean says: Crowe is on the menu for this one. Javier Bardem gave arguably the performance of the year for "Before Night Falls," but Crowe is the favorite. I'm not crying over this one, however. Crowe had to overcome a B-movie script but was still able to make his lines ring with a sustained dignity.

Best Actress

- Joan Allen - "The Contender"
- Juliette Binoche - "Chocolat"
- Ellen Burstyn** - "Requiem for a Dream"
- Laura Linney - "You Can Count on Me"
- Julia Roberts** - "Erin Brockovich"

Sam says: Roberts shoots and scores. The publicity is there. So is the performance.

Sean says: The pretty woman gets her statue Sunday. Roberts gave a performance that was a 1990s version of "Norma Rae." Easily the best performance of her career. However, credit should also go to the writers of the movie for providing her with whip-smart comebacks.

Supporting Actor

- Jeff Bridges - "The Contender"
- Willem Dafoe - "Shadow of the Vampire"
- Benicio Del Toro - "Traffic"
- Albert Finney** - "Erin Brockovich"
- Joaquin Phoenix - "Gladiator"

Sam says: Del Toro gave the best performance of any of the nominees, period. He's hot enough and visible enough to hold off Albert Finney, who has been nominated often but never won.

Sean says: Finney upsets Del Toro. It is odd that Del Toro, such a forceful presence in "Traffic," was not nominated for lead actor. In some award circles, he actually won for best lead actor. Finney gave a great performance as Brockovich's put-upon boss and is the sentimental favorite. Look for that to put him over the top.

Supporting Actress

- Judi Dench - "Chocolat"
- Marcia Gay Harden - "Pollock"
- Kate Hudson - "Almost Famous"
- Frances McDormand** - "Almost Famous"
- Julie Walters - "Billy Elliot"

Sam says: Hudson is the favorite, but something says Harden. "Pollock" could be the surprise of the Oscars. Voters will likely eat this project up.

Sean says: You would think that McDormand and Hudson would cancel each other out but look for Hudson to win out. That might not be a good thing, however, as this award can sometimes be a curse to an actress. When was the last time Marissa Tomei had a great role?

Best Director

- Stephen Daldry - "Billy Elliot"
- Steven Soderbergh - "Traffic" and "Erin Brockovich"
- Ang Lee - "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon"
- Ridley Scott - "Gladiator"

Sam says: Soderbergh's vote gets split, but I doubt it would have mattered anyway. "Traffic" is more a triumph of editing, and "Brockovich" isn't entirely impressive. Lee's work is magnificent, above and beyond that of the other nominees. "CTHD" isn't brilliantly written; it is so directed.

Sean says: With the exception of Daldry, everyone in this list has a shot. Soderbergh was more creative in his directing talents in "Traffic," but the Academy traditionally shuns brave movies

that take on controversial subjects. Ang Lee's flawless direction of "CTHD" should put him over the top, though some in the Academy may be wary to vote for a flick that has some of the most intense martial arts scenes ever put to film.

Best Picture:

- "Gladiator"
- "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon"
- "Traffic"
- "Erin Brockovich"

"Chocolat"

Sam says: Guess what? I like "Traffic." "Gladiator," methinks, might not stand up with the voters, especially when it's clear it is not the best film. "Dragon" will get best foreign language picture. And so it is possible, a long shot but possible, that "Traffic," given its message and scope and star power, has a legitimate chance.

Sean says: "Tiger" was the best film of the year. "Traffic" was the most important film of the year. But "Gladiator" has old-school vet Ridley Scott as director, a bankable actor as the lead and an epic scale of the movie. "Gladiator" wins, but the Academy may be kicking itself years from now for making similar mistakes such as "Titanic" and "Driving Miss Daisy."



Art speaker: Religion overlooked

BY MAUREEN GALLAGHER

Conventional wisdom about the role of religion in art was challenged Tuesday in a lecture entitled "Faith, Icons, and Altars: Rethinking Religion in Contemporary American Art."

The lecture was given by Erika Doss, professor of art history and director of the American Studies Program at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Doss came to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as the result of a grant given to the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery by the Henry Luce Foundation, Sheldon Director Jan Driesbach said.

The \$100,000 from the Luce Foundation brings six American art scholars to the Sheldon to use their collections and archives for research. Doss is the fourth to visit

UNL.

"Everyone who visits is obligated to do presentations on campus," Driesbach said. "There is also an understanding that their research will result in a publication."

In her lecture, Doss spoke about how most of the art world is uncomfortable with religion, as it is often linked to primitive art, and artists who portray religious subjects are given an "outsider status." She said that many works by religious artists are "underconsidered" by critics.

One example given was Robert Gober whose "Virgin Installation" at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles has created controversy.

The exhibit shows a statue of the Virgin Mary pierced by a large copper tube along with drains that reveal a peaceful stream below the

room's gray cement floor. The exhibit has drawn fire from religious groups. Gober is Catholic.

Doss said much religious work deals with tension the artists have faced between the art world and their religious backgrounds.

Doss also mentioned Kiki Smith, a contemporary artist known for her religious statuary and emphasis on the vulnerability of the human body. Tim Rollins, a Baptist minister, was also featured in the talk.

Well-known artists such as Andy Warhol and Georgia O'Keefe, who were religious and occasionally painted religious subjects, also were mentioned.

Doss said religion in art should be given more mainstream attention because it is such an important subject.

"Religion is central to American identity," Doss said.

Faculty's woodwind quintet offers variety for spring concert

The award-nominated musicians play in the once-in-a-semester event Thursday.

BY MATTHEW EBERT

Five well-dressed individuals sit in a semicircle on stage, the house lights dim and the crowd quiets.

This is the setting for the Moran Quintet, the resident faculty woodwind quintet of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln School of Music.

"It's a short, one-hour concert with a good variety of quintet pieces, ranging from jazz-influenced, to modern, to late 19th-century French," said John Bailey, the flutist for the quintet.

The quintet, formed in 1986 and named for the late John Moran, performs once in the fall semester and once in the spring, on Thursday.

The four other members of the quintet are William McMullen, oboe, Diane Cawein, clarinet, Gary Echols, bassoon, and Allen French, horn. All members of the quintet are professors of their respective instrument and play in the quintet because of their faculty position "and because we all love to play," Bailey said.

The quintet has toured all around the Midwest, including Ohio, Illinois, Texas and Oklahoma. In 1992, the group performed in South Korea.

The Moran Quintet was nominated for National Public Radio's Lucian Wulsin Award for Best Regional Performance, Small Ensemble, and was popular enough to be aired nationally several times.

The last piece they will perform on Thursday was composed by Paquito D'Rivera, who was featured in and on the cover of "International Musician" in January.