

THE OREGONIAN, FRIDAY, JANUARY 15, 1999



Take your choice of choice productions

Alan Ayckbourn's bitter comedy about infidelity and a Tennessee Williams play are among the shows

Major productions, world premieres, performance pieces — where's the theater fan to go this weekend? When the menu is this crowded, it's a matter of taste, of course.

"Now the Other Half Loves"

The bitter comedies of British playwright Alan Ayckbourn have been criticized for their narrowness of range. They nearly always involve upper-middle class characters dealing with love, career and profound discontent. But Ayckbourn's savvy stagecraft (he's acted, directed, stage-managed and produced during his career) and his ear for dialogue and the sharp one-liner separate him from the peck of chroniclers of middle-class, middle-age unhappiness. Portland Center Stage has staged two other Ayckbourn plays, "Season's Greetings" in 1991 and "Absurd Person Singular" in 1994, but this earlier piece can be funnier than either, thanks to the interlocking infidelities and threats of infidelity among the three couples in the show. Cliff Fannin Baker, who directed both "Comfort and Joy" and "A Tuna Christmas" at Center Stage previously, faces the challenge of staging two dinner parties on stage simultaneously, with one of the three couples in the play the guests at both. His cast includes Roger Forbes, who was excellent in both "Skylight" and "Valley Song" last season at Center Stage, and Sharonlee McLean, the best part of the company's stage adaptation of "The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe." Opens 8 p.m. Friday, continues 7 p.m. Tuesdays/Wednesdays, 8

p.m. Fridays/Saturdays, 2 and 7 p.m. Sundays, through Feb. 6, Newmark Theatre, 1111 S.W. Broadway, \$10-\$38; 274-6508.

"Suddenly Last Summer"

Profile Theatre Project's future has fluttered precariously in the wind for the past several months as the company, entering its second year, tried to find a theater space for this year's season. Given the success of its first year, devoted to the plays of Arthur Kopit, it's happy news that a home has been found for this year's investigation of Tennessee Williams. The company opens its new season with an abbreviated run of this 1958 play, inspired by the confinements of Williams' sister in mental hospitals. Directed by artistic director Jane Unger, the show stars several actors affiliated with last season's successes, most notably Gaynor Sferchi, who won last season's best actress Drammy award for her portrayal of a stroke victim in "Wings." Also on hand are Jean Miller, Jamie Chatalas, and Lell Norby.

Opens 8 p.m. Friday, continues 8 p.m. Thursdays/Saturdays, 3 p.m. Sunday, through Jan. 23, Firehouse Theatre, 1436 S.W. Montgomery St., \$10-\$16; 242-0000.

"Three Days of Rain"

Allen Nause, the artistic director of Artists Repertory Theatre, is possibly the best director in town, especially when the material requires deep personal investment by actors. This Richard Greenberg drama creatively probes into matters of family, friendship and career, and that sounds like a rec-

ipe for success for Nause and ART. The production stars David Ivers, Marilyn Stacey and Michael O'Connell, each of whom plays two roles.

Opens 8 p.m. Friday, continues 7 p.m. Wednesdays/Thursdays, 8 p.m. Fridays/Saturdays, 2 p.m. Sundays, through Feb. 21, Reiersgaard Theatre, 1516 S.W. Alder St., \$16.50-\$25; 241-1278.

"Bob"

This one-man play marks the intersection of two leading American avant-gardists — Robert Wilson, whose mostly European-based career has been marked by striking stage and opera spectacles, and Anne Bogart, the theater director and theorist who fashioned "Bob" as a sort of exploration and homage to Wilson. Starring Will Bond, "Bob" weaves stories about Wilson's life with his ideas about performance in a comic and startling monologue.

Plays 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Northwest Neighborhood Cultural Center, 1819 N.W. Everett St., \$14-\$17; 242-1419.

"Talk Radio"

Kevin-Michael Moore has proved in a series of mostly comic roles at various Portland theaters that he is willing to jump up and down in places most actors fear to tiptoe. He should be at home as Barry Champlain, the disintegrating talk show host in Eric Bogosian's "Talk Radio." First staged in Portland in 1985, the show was the result of a collaboration by Bogosian and Portland artist/playwright Ted Savinar, though Bogosian emerged with writing credit.

Its harsh critique of American society and media predated our current fascination with radio talk show hosts, and it's still pertinent.

Opens 8 p.m. Friday, continues 8 p.m. Thursdays/Sundays, through Feb. 13, Theater! Theatre!, 3430 S.E. Belmont St.; \$10-\$12.50; 232-7072.

"The Further Adventures of Anse and Babe in No-Man's Land"

This is a world premiere by Portland playwright Tania Myren for Soweula Theater, the edgy offspring of Stark Raving Theatre that began its life in the fall with a startling production of "Savage in Limbo." Director Gretchen Corbett has a cast of Soweula company actors, including Lorraine Bahr, Chris Harder, Barry Hunt and Kelly Tallent, to help create the dueling cultures in Myren's post-apocalyptic drama.

The show opens 8 p.m. Friday and continues 8 p.m. Thursdays/Saturdays, 4 p.m. Sundays, through Feb. 20, Back Door Theater, 4319 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd.; \$6-\$15; 230-2090.

"Mary Tudor"

Coho Productions is back with another new script by a Portland playwright, "Mary Tudor" by William S. Gregory. This historical drama follows the life of Mary, eldest daughter of Henry VIII, through the succession and religious upheavals created by her father. It stars Diane Englert, Michele Mariana and Sam Mowry.

Opens 8 p.m. Friday, continues 8 p.m. Thursdays/Saturdays, through Feb. 21,



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plus matinees 2 p.m. Feb. 7, 14 and 21, Riverstone Condominium, 804 N.W. 12th Ave.; \$10-\$12; 295-3593.

Tennessee tension: Lell Norby, left, and Jamie Chatalas star in "Suddenly Last Summer." Tennessee Williams' long one-act play inspired by the time his sister spent in mental institutions.

"The Memory Place"

Director Susan Banyas has been helping artists and non-artists develop their personal stories into material for performance. For this show she assembled an intriguing group of local artists to recollect their pasts, including Wendy Westerwelle, Leanne Grabel, Steve Sander and Gregg Bielemeier. Westerwelle will talk about her days at Storefront Theatre, the now-legendary Portland theater company; Bielemeier recalls his childhood memories of a Catholic holy day; Grabel remembers growing up in Stockton, Calif.; Sander recalls his discovery of Henry Miller and his awakening to the sensual life in Queens, N.Y.

Opens 8 p.m. Thursday, continues 8 p.m. Jan. 22-23, 28-30, 2 p.m. Jan. 24 and 31, Dreams Well Studio, 2857 S.E. Stark St.; \$12 (except \$25-\$100 for Jan. 23 gala); 231-1108.