

Theatre department's fall Plays Previewed

by Tim Donahue

Sixty students auditioned for the American premier of Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *Abode of Peace*, the first of the theater department's two fall productions. The play calls for a cast of only six.

"There has been a tremendously increasing interest in theater at the school," said department chair Sears Eldredge.

This year's first year students represent the largest concentration of dramatic arts majors Macalester has ever seen. Winning five of the six roles, "they certainly gave the old timers a run for their money," Eldredge said.

Abode of Peace is a physical and spiritual journey which places the actors in the Indian Himalayas. In this cool spot of isolation and tranquility, an elderly woman is dying in the care of an old Indian friend. She is soon descended upon by her niece, the niece's lover and two friends they have met along the way.

The elderly woman's approaching death helps the characters examine their generational conflicts, cultural differences and their "reasons for being."

"Really, the play asks, 'what is your abode of peace?'

There are intonations of this question throughout," Eldredge said.

The characters may find peace through external surroundings, like the beautiful hill station, or in their own minds. This is an issue that the audience is expected to face. Indeed, this poses a challenge to the play's production.

"Can we master the audience and take them on this journey with us?" Eldredge said.

The cast has until Parents' Weekend, October 13 and 14, to ask this question of themselves. During this stretch rehearsals will run six days a week, each for two to three hours.

An elaborate hilltop set suggesting height and isolation has been in production since early summer by Technical Director Dan Keyser.

Playwright Ruth Praver Jhabvala is best known for winning the academy award for her screenplay of the film *A Room With a View*. Eldredge first heard of *Abode of Peace* when he was living in England—he says the play's

"European interest in India" appealed to him.

While the play's language is simple, it is subtle as well. "The more I have read it, the more I have learned that there



is much buried beneath the surface," Eldredge said.

One month later the theater department will take on a slightly lighter, more humorous air with the performance of Tom Stoppard's *Dogg's Hamlet and Cahoot's Macbeth*—a set of paired one acts. Director Cynthia Goatley

said the thing to watch here is language.

"Language can be playful and it can manipulate us as we manipulate it, something that is interesting to me," said Goatley.

Just when the audience has had time to adapt to the strange sounds of Dogg, (a language), a deliveryman arrives and addresses the characters in English. An awkward humor breaks out, which puzzles the audience as to which language they should follow.

"It's obvious that we are manipulated by language in advertising, but what about in the everyday?" asked Sears Eldredge.

An awards ceremony scene cuts away into a seven-minute rendition of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, performed in English and highlighted by all of the famous scenes and speeches. Stoppard's poetic licence really flies when he calls the actors back for an encore. In one minute, the cast of fifteen or so repeats their performance of *Hamlet* at 45 rpm.

This madness stops as *Cahoot's Macbeth* opens with

the serious witches scene from the original *Macbeth*. One learns that the actors in this scene are a group of artists from a Totalitarian nation who, due to the restrictions of their government, have not been given artistic freedom.

While they try to carry on with their acting, the characters and the audience are constantly interrupted by an inspector from the government who curses their artistic expression. Then, the delivery man, (that oddball from the first play), returns. This time, however, he is speaking Dogg, which proves to be quite a useful tool for the struggling artisans. By manipulating their language, the actors gain freedom from the inspector.

Such themes of repression are gaining increasing relevance. Recent debate in Congress about funding for the National Endowment for the Arts points to the question of what art is, and if it can in fact have limitations.

"Once we start controlling art," Goatley said, "we can never stop. Who's to say that something is obscene and something is not?"

Goatley's production will premiere November 10. Auditions start Wednesday, September 20.

Psychotic Frog Releases Guitarfish

by Tony Van Dorston

The guitarfish on the cover of the new Psychotic Frog tape of the same name is a real creature. The viviparous ray of the family Rhinobatidae resembles a guitar in outline when viewed from above. It's a sluggish fish found half-buried in muddy grounds, a bottom-feeder munching on small crustaceans with its blunt teeth.

In contrast, the deranged amphibious band is as lively as a slaving piranha with a bite sharper than ever.

"Guitarfish" was recorded live in two hours, with four of the six songs done on the first take. Produced by the band, the tape has a surprisingly clean, sharp sound for a low budget product.

Guitarist Jason Goodyear ('90) jumps into "Faith" with a touch of feedback fleshing out his meaty guitar. The chord transitions are tight, changing to choppy rhythms that compel the body to jerk spasmodically regardless of good sense. Goodyear's and Dan Rippey's ('89) singing cuts into the mix nicely—a refreshing improvement over the unintelligible vocals of their early live shows.

The combined singing of Rippey and Goodyear is an important part of the Psychotic Frog sound. Their different styles merge into a chorus that is not quite synchronized, but blends perfectly with the music.

"Funky Lotion" improves the Red Hot Chili Pepper's own "funky" guitar riffing, with a sprightly solo that builds into the splattering climax of Rippey exuberantly singing "up, up, up and away."

"Wind Blow Down My House" features reggae vocal phrasing by Rippey backed with Goodyear's lusty growls. Nathan Shaw ('92) on the drums is in top form on this song. Rippey shouts "yeah the wind tear me apart/but the wind ain't what's breakin' my heart."

My favorite song is "Lust In the New World," which begins with a beautiful acoustic guitar melody. Their eccentric harmonizing tells a tale of celibate housewives who "have risen to answer the call/ saving the world/for a shiny new day," and "pot-bellied, pin-striped, political fools/will be left in the dust."

The best part of "Pushing" is Dan Lieberman's ('89) bass line, which is supposedly out of tune. That great bass rhythm is my favorite part, I hope Lieberman continues to whack that bass out of tune every time they play this hungry love song. It pushes color into the song, "pushing color through the sky/pushing color deep inside."

"Guitarfish" shows that both Psychotic Frog's song writing and playing are worthy of any record label, and a glut of loyal listeners.

Psychotic Frog will play these songs, and hopefully their covers of "Heat Wave" and "Love Stinks" at the Cabooze on October 17th, 9:00 p.m.



Psychotic Frog, featuring Nathan Shaw, Jason Goodyear, Dan Rippey and Dan Lieberman will play the Cabooze on Sunday at 9:00 p.m.