

Festival Offers American Series

Drama Depicts Hillbilly Life

By DENISE DEMONG
Collegian Staff Writer

The semi-starvation, shiftlessness and squalor of a Georgia backwoods family are dramatized in "Tobacco Road," the second production of the Pennsylvania State Festival Theatre season. The famous comedy-drama will be presented July 16-20 and 22-26 at the Playhouse Theatre.

The current production, Thornton Wilder's "Our Town," will continue through this Saturday. The two are among six plays to be presented during the 1969 season, based on the theme, "Made in USA, A Summer of American Drama."

The plays, which include a series of old favorites and one group of avant-garde productions, have been selected for their historic, geographic and thematic diversity. Introducing the season in the theatre playbill, William H. Allison, head of the Department of Theatre Arts, writes, "A recent Theatre Conference report stated that an indigenous American theatre does not exist, since the main body of our theatre is derived from European theatre. We hope that this summer's selection of plays in professional production will prove a pleasant contradiction of this indictment."

"Tobacco Road," Jack Kirkland's dramatization of the Erskine Caldwell novel, presents what director Perry Bruskin terms "a uniquely American character" the hillbilly. The central figure is Jeter Lester, the lazy, flea-bitten, turnip-chewing Georgia farmer.

He and his degenerating family are portrayed in their indifference to their ineffectual struggle to hang on to their property. Originally intended as a compassionate

social document, the play has long been appreciated as comedy by audiences unprepared for the speech and attitudes of the characters.

Bruskin intends to combine theatrical realism and naturalism to help the comic requirements of the play, while maintaining the "truth and beauty" of the characters.

The play, a slow-starter in New York in 1933, went on to a then record-breaking 3,180 Broadway performances during seven and a half years.

Its success was increased tremendously when road company productions were banned or censored in Chicago, Detroit, St. Paul, Raleigh, and Boston. Eminent writers, including Edgar Lee Masters, supported the play, and Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt endorsed it as "a play for sober-minded people interested in better social conditions."

Max Gulak, who plays Mr. Webb in "Our Town," will appear as Jeter Lester in the Festival Theatre production. Gulak is a bi-lingual actor who has performed on the French stage, radio, and screen as well as in numerous off-Broadway productions and Festival Theatre shows in previous seasons.

Kate Wilkinson, Mrs. Gibbs in "Our Town," will portray Ada Lester, Jeter's wife. Christopher Murney will be seen as Dude Lester, Ellen Greenfield as Ellie May, Grace Grant as Grandma Lester and Paul Villani as Lov Ben-sey. Also returning from "Our Town" are Joseph Warren, Leslie Cass, Barrie Younfellow, William Swetland and Jim Hummert.

The Festival Theatre, now in its twelfth season, is the Equity stage company operating during the summer under the sponsorship of the Department of Theatre Arts.

All productions by the 100-member company are presented at the Playhouse and Pavilion Theatres. Until six years ago, they were presented in a nearby barn play-house.

The rest of the season's offerings include "Collision Course," which consists of twelve playlets by contemporary playwrights; Richardson and Berney's fantasy, "Dark of the Moon;" Krulman and Hart's comedy, "You

Can't Take it With You" and "The Drunkard," an 1844 temperance melodrama by W. H. Smith and an anonymous "Gentleman."

University students are entitled to a special \$5.00 admission to "preview nights," which are the night preceding each opening. The dates for the remaining previews are July 15 for "Tobacco Road," July 22 for "Collision Course," Aug. 5 for "Dark of the Moon," Aug. 19 for "You

Can't Take it With You" and Sept. 2 for "The Drunkard."

Student admission to all other performances is \$1.50. Ticket prices for others are \$2.75 Tuesdays through Fridays; \$3.25 Saturdays, and \$2.25 Sundays. Curtain time is 8:30 p.m. for all performances. Reservations may be made at the Festival Theatre Box Office, 103 Arts Building; or by phoning the appropriate theatre.

DOC Reassures Parents

It's almost like saving "yes" to the old USO poster with the wide-eyed young soldier sitting in the fox-hole pleading: "Does Anyone Know I'm Here?"

The University's Division of Counseling has devised a special program designed to assure parents watching their sons and daughters go off to college for the first time that, "Yes, there is someone who knows they're here."

"A major concern of these parents is that their children will become just another number or statistic among 25,000 numbers and statistics," reports Dan J. Peterman, assistant director of the DOC and coordinator of a recent survey seeking to evaluate the role of counseling.

To offset this concern, Penn State decided the only way was to let the parents see the University "as it is," to counsel parents as well as the students.

So, each summer, each parent is given the opportunity to come to Penn State for one day prior to his offspring's first term and examine the University from head to toe.

"I think our greatest success in this venture is showing the parents that someone cares about their youngsters at Penn State, that the University isn't just a dehumanized diploma factory, but a place where a student can have someone to turn to when he's having troubles," says Peterman. "I think the parents leave Penn State with a much more comfortable attitude toward the University."

Peterman bases his conclusions on a survey of 214 families who accompanied their youngsters to a pre-registration testing and counseling session last summer.

During their visit, the parents met with representatives from the staffs of DOC, Office of the Dean of Students, and the Deans of the colleges to which students were admitted.

In addition to information on the academic organization and the social milieu of the University, each parent received data enabling him to compare his youngster's standing with the rest of the freshman class. An interest profile and a prediction of academic performance was also prepared for each student.

Response to the program, Peterman found, was overwhelmingly favorable. Following the counseling day, both mothers and fathers reported feeling increasingly comfortable in their role as parents, and more confident of their children's capacities to deal successfully with college.

In the area of educational performance, parents indicated that counseling had helped them adjust to the idea that their children were likely to earn lower grades than they had in high school.

Fathers also became less inclined to view interruption of college as an effective intervention for a student in academic troubles, possibly because of their increasing confidence that their children would seek help if problems arose.

There was a strong shift among parents toward a greater tolerance for program changes of their sons or daughters, along with less concern about the job-getting potential of their children, even if they should shift toward liberal arts types of programs.

NOTICE

Summer Human Relations Lab To Be Held July 18-20, 1969*

Human Relations training (also known as sensitivity or t-groups) is designed to improve the participant's awareness, communication, and leadership skills through a group experience. It provides an opportunity to increase self-awareness, awareness of other people, practice new ways of behaving, and learning how to learn with other students, faculty, and staff.

Applications may be obtained at 202 Hetzel Union Building

*Lab conditional upon student response.

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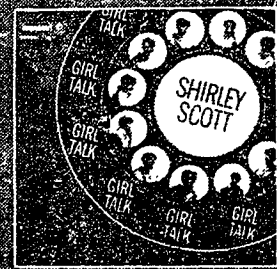
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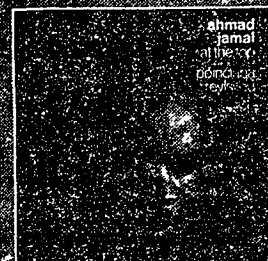
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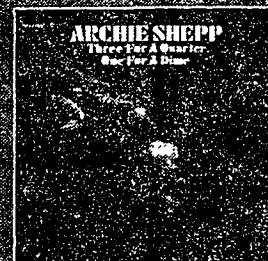
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