

# FEATURES

## Late-night theater quietly begins in Asheville

Lynne Fox  
Features Reporter

The inaugural season of the Highland Repertory Theatre began Halloween night with the production of "Language of Angels." The group presented the new play, by Naomi Iizuka, which has only been performed three times before.

Most theater devotees of Asheville failed to realize that there is an added late showing of the productions.

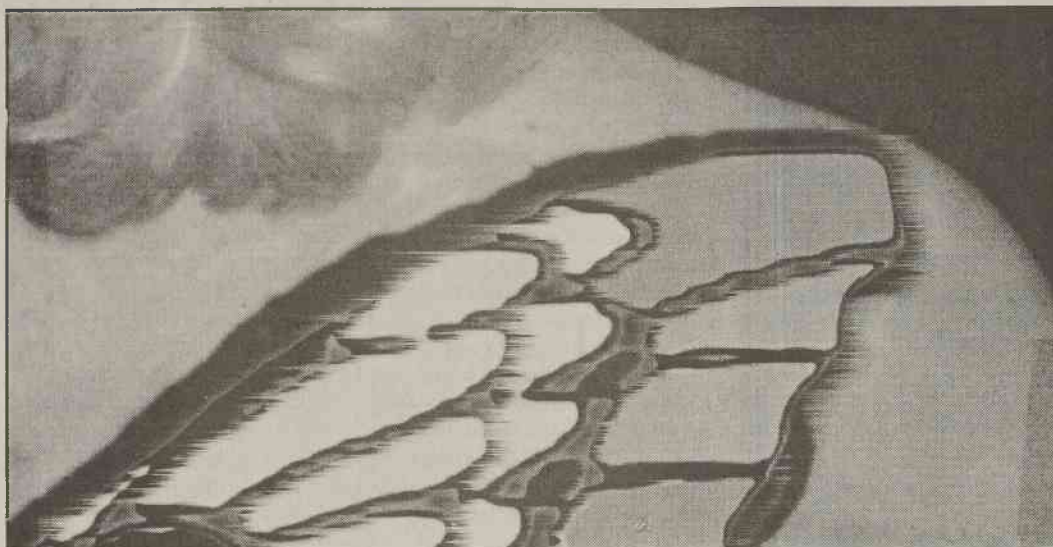
The audience could go out to a leisurely dinner and top the evening off with good theater. For a town that tends to close down early, except for the bar scene, this was a refreshing addition to Asheville.

D. Rae Bucher, co-artistic director of the Repertory Theater, said the play is about the "effects of tragedy of others." She described it as "creepy, different, [and] something you haven't seen before."

The 70-minute play proved to be all that. The nonlinear aspect of the format added to that description.

"Language of Angels" consisted of eight actors, who presented the evocative content in an exceptional way.

The minimalist set provided an essential background for the con-



COURTESY OF DIANA WORTHAM THEATER

The Highland Repertory Theatre presents "Language of Angels," a play that describes the effects of tragedy, in Diana Wortham Theater as the first play of their inaugural season.

tent of the play, and the innovative use of flashlights in the beginning was interesting and realistic.

The play, directed by co-artistic director, Andrew Gall, is set in Western North Carolina. It examines the disappearance and possible murder of Celie, performed by Tracey Johnson-Crum.

Celie reappears several times during the play. Her "Daisy Mae"-like interpretation was perfect for the character, and her presence was felt

throughout the performance.

All of the characters have their futures altered because of their presence the night of the tragedy. Some die.

Some get into drug and alcohol abuse, and one barely survives, but still deals with the mystery.

The only two characters present by the end of the play were Danielle, the victim of drugs and isolation, played by McKenzie Baker, and Jeff Messner's character J.B., whose supposed guilt inflicting both physical and mental anguish.

Baker's performance was exceptional. She portrayed her character as if she had not learned lines, but lived the life.

Her character's evolution during the play led her from strength and leadership to a shell of her former self. Her last scene as a drug addict was riveting in its reality.

Messer created a character that remained locked to a past, even as he became a person of community prominence.

His development of J.B. did not resort to creating a caricature of a

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southern sheriff. He seemed to hit his acting stride as the play progressed. He certainly held his own in a complex character.

Billy, played by Jesse Benz, gave a performance reminiscent of actor Harvey Keitel in its intensity and electric quality. His character's irrational behavior was released in a fireworks display of emotion that exploded for the audience.

The rest of the actors were all multidimensional and effective in their roles.

The audience of only three people was the only downside of the night. However, I suspect more and more people will take advantage of the late-hour production.

Future productions of the Highland Repertory Theater will include productions of "How I Learned to Drive," "Waiting for Godot" and "A Misdemeanor."

### Review

## Send Us Your Weekend Event Announcements!

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the Monday before to place events in our new Weekend Guide!

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### THE BLUE BANNER

## Weekend Guide

### Friday the 9th

Richard Gillewitz at the Grey Eagle, 8p.m.

Loch Ness Johnny, American pop and Irish traditional at Jack of the Wood

Southern Lights with Town Hall at Stella Blue, 10p.m.

Con Clave at Tressa's, 10p.m.

Salsa Dancing, La Paz Restaurant, Biltmore Village. Free instruction- 9:30p.m., dancing at 10:30p.m.

Free-form dancing to recorded music from around the world, live drumming. Fortune Bldg., 727 Haywood Rd. Info: 250-9913.

### Saturday the 10th

Nick Stubblefield, keyboardist, at the Blue Ridge Grill, 5:30p.m. to 9:30p.m.

Karaoke and Dance Music at Alibi's

Sons of Ralph at Jack of the Woods

D.J. Saint Mark dance party at Cinjade's

Tyler Ramsey Trio at Stella Blue

Jellyroll Antennae at Tressa's

Bellydancing w/ Baraka Mundi at Zambra

### Sunday the 11th

Hike Cold Mountain, please call Katy at 254-5561 to REGISTER BY FRI., NOV. 9. and ask for more info!

Jazz Night w/ Takin' Back Trio at Barley's

Open-Mic at Alibi's

Irish Session at Jack of the Woods

Karaoke Contest at Momma's Dinner Club

Theatre UNCA  
presents  
November 15, 16, 17 at 8:00pm  
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