

Group will pay tribute to 'Prairie' radio program

By ALSTON RUSSELL
Staff Writer

Tonight listeners can travel to the sounds of mystical Lake Wobegone with Peter Otroushko and The Mando Boys as they pay tribute to the celebrated radio program, "A Prairie Home Companion," from Minnesota Public Radio. The performance at Durham's Carolina Theatre will feature music and storytelling from this popular radio show and will transport its audience to the fabricated banks of Lake Wobegone.

The event is co-sponsored by Blue Quail Productions and WUNC radio.

"They (Peter and The Mando Boys) mix a lot of humor into what they do," said Doug Guild, president of Blue Quail Productions. The costumes they wear foretell this comical aura, since they sport plastic decorator sunglasses and hats with tassels that resemble the formal ones worn at a Shriner's meeting.

Songwriter Pierce Pettis will open the show with songs and music for both the acoustic guitar and the harmonica. Pettis, who formerly lived in Chapel Hill, has written songs for famous artists such as Joan Baez and Alex Taylor Guild said.

The performance tonight is a "tribute to that show ('Prairie') featuring people who have appeared on the show," Guild said. One of the radio personalities featured is Peter Otroushko. According to Guild, Otroushko has the closest ties to "Prairie." Greg Brown, the other featured personality tonight, has also appeared on the radio show.

Guild said that Brown has produced more than four albums, with his latest one entitled "Bath-tub Blues." Otroushko has also produced several albums, and helped with Bob Dylan's album, "Blood on the Tracks." Guild said.

WUNC's promotion coordinator Lee Hansley said that "Prairie" is one of the most popular programs at WUNC. The radio station has carried this Minnesota-based national program for many years. Hansley said.

The show is "a satire of American lifestyles," Hansley said. He said it features mostly traditional music with Garrison Keillor as the show's storyteller. Everything from the place of action in the stories (Lake Wobegone) to the sponsors of the show (Powder-milk Biscuits) are spoofs, he said.

The show tonight will also feature the winner of a storytelling contest held by WUNC and Blue Quail. Guild said that the contest was held expressly for this show. Louise Taylor, from Buie's Corner, will get to tell her story at the show after she successfully boxed out the other Triangle area contestants.

As clearly implied by the band's name, The Mando Boys play mandolins as well as other instruments. "The Boys" — Maxim, Habib, Maurice and Sonny — play everything from Bach to Benny Goodman, from ragtime to rumba.

Guild said that their musical professionalism accounts for Otroushko and The Mando Boys' respectability in the world of acoustic music. "They're extremely good musicians," he said.

Tonight's performance should be intermixed with stories, music and jokes that satisfy all fans and inquisitive newcomers to the world of Lake Wobegone.

"A Tribute to 'A Prairie Home Companion'" will begin tonight at 8 p.m. at the Carolina Theatre in Durham. Call 942-2023 or 688-1939 for ticket information.

Seasoned jazz musicians jam in last concert of UNC series

The Al Grey-Buddy Tate Quintet, a jazz group consisting of five veteran performers, played a marvelous concert to an appreciative but small crowd of about 200 in Memorial Hall Tuesday night.

The concert, the third and final event of the popular UNC Jazz Artist Series, featured nearly three hours of classical jazz music. The Quintet members played for the first half, and were then joined in varying combinations by the UNC Jazz Band.

Both Grey and Tate are extraordinary performers, men from the earliest traditions of jazz music. They were both members and soloists of the late Count Basie's band, and have played extensively throughout Europe and in Japan.

Grey was doubtlessly the leading musician and personality of the show, though Tate had his moments too. Grey is famous for his trombone and the plunger-style technique he uses. He is very gregarious on stage, and appears comfortable and relaxed, as if he were performing for a small group of friends rather than in an auditorium of paying listeners.

He often broke into a broad smile while the other members were working with their solos. And he would dance a little, and almost seem to mimic the music, jumping at each loud dynamic change as if he were startled.

The sounds Grey can produce from his trombone are even more noteworthy than his stage presence.

Rob Sherman

Concert

He can make sounds as soft as a gentle hum, but then from nowhere will emanate a wonderful brassy blare.

Other times he builds the conflict of the music with long slides and intense vibratos so slow and thoughtful it is almost possible to count the pulses.

Tate is a great contrast to Grey, both in playing style and character. Tate is a quiet, brooding stage performer, and his music is equally so.

His instruments are the saxophone and the clarinet, and he too is amazing. Sometimes the sounds of Grey's trombone and Tate's sax mesh with clarity and sweetness that can lull the listener gently to sleep. But Tate is also capable of speaking his own language with the sax, and can produce sounds like tragic wails or peals of laughter.

Perhaps the highlight of the show was when Tate performed on the clarinet. He only played it once for a piece he wrote titled "Blue Creek."

It was classic blues, and brought visions and sensations like a hot night in Harlem in the 1920s. Tate was bathed in a purple spot light, and Grey muted his trombone. The effect was perfect.

The supporting members of the

Quintet were also very good. Each got to demonstrate his ability in many solos, and it seemed that each member was given one piece in which his particular talent would shine.

Eddie Green played a long piano solo, and Tate and Grey left the stage. He proved himself very flexible and remarkably able to produce different moods from the keys.

J.J. Wiggins was the bassist, and his articulation, especially in the upper ranges, was excellent.

And the drummer, Bobby Durham, could play long near-frantic drum solos, solos that sounded like an avalanche with a beat. He also has a wonderful voice, though a bit nasal in the higher registers, and sang "My Romance."

The Quintet's music selection was song after song of classic swing-style jazz. They included Henry Mancini's "Days of Wine and Roses," Basie's "Jumping at the Woodside," Duke Ellington's "Things Ain't What They Used to Be," and "Green Dolphin Street."

The UNC Jazz Band was also very good, but there was a comparison problem, and many of the audience members left early during this part of the show.

The band added to the Quintet's music some drama and intensity that only a big band can add, and did a fine job as a student band. But they don't have the captivating power or the technique of the musicians who have been playing for decades.

PlayMakers produce magical 'Midsummer Night's Dream'

By ANDREW EDMONSON
Staff Writer

"A Midsummer Night's Dream" is a celebration of the most positive strivings of the human spirit," said director David Hammond of the latest production by PlayMakers Repertory Company. "It celebrates the desire of man to find meaning and order in the universe. Finally it celebrates the theater as the place the community joins together in sharing, revelation, and knowledge."

The play, which opens Saturday night in Paul Green Theatre, is Shakespeare's classic comedy about four lovers who run away to the forest. Intertwoven into the plot are the story of a fairy world and the comic mishaps of a group of laborers who are attempting to stage a production of "Pyramus and Thisbe."

PRC's aim is to create "a magical experience," according to Hammond. The production is very physical: the actors take full advantage of acrobatic and gymnastic techniques. "We are at the point where

we hope that the audience will see actors flying," Hammond said. Also, people on the stage suddenly transform themselves into animals, spirits and psyches.

The technical aspects of the show reflect this element of the fantastic also. Costumer Bobbi Owen has designed clothes that are alive with flashy color. The performance space in Paul Green Theatre is being used in a new and different way. The stage is dominated by the color purple, and there are many different ramps and levels for the players to act on.

Doug Wagner, a junior from High Point, has composed an original score for the production. "The play only runs two hours," says graduate student Derek Gagnier, who plays the role of Puck. "But it's not a sociology lecture; it's two hours of fun."

Hammond views the production as the culmination of the graduate students' two years of experience in acting together. No professional actors have been brought in for this presentation. The play was chosen

for this season because it had numerous strong roles that would afford acting challenges to a large number of the theatre graduate students.

"Striking the proper balance between the text and the movement has been very challenging," Gagnier said. "I've learned how very important it is to be really, really prepared."

Hammond, who has directed "Dream" three times previously, said that the play is especially suited to fill the last slot of PRC's season. "It's a very affirming experience," he said. "A great antidote to exams."

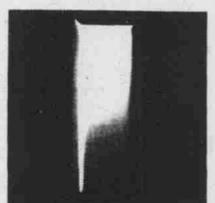
"A Midsummer Night's Dream" will be performed by PlayMakers Repertory Company through May 3 in Paul Green Theatre. Call 962-1121 for ticket information.



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