

Movies: 'Iron Man' a complex film with a conflicted protagonist **PAGE F4**

Music: VHS or Beta departs from '80s sound on new CD **PAGE F11**

Dining Out: Vancouver Pizza back to dishing out pies **PAGE F28**

The Columbian

Weekend

and beyond

Friday, May 2, 2008



Riding desire

Clark College
doesn't shy
from passion,
violence
in 'Streetcar'

PAGE F3

If you go

■ **What:** Clark College Theatre presents "A Streetcar Named Desire," by Tennessee Williams.

■ **When:** May 2-17, with performances at 7:30 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays during the run as well as 2 p.m. May 10.

■ **Where:** Clark College's Decker Theatre, 1933 Fort Vancouver Way, Vancouver.

■ **Cost:** \$10.

■ **Info:** 360-992-2815 or clark.edu.



Clark College is staging a production of "A Streetcar Named Desire" that doesn't gloss over the violence and passion that bind the play's trio of characters, Blanche (Heidi K. Hunter), Stanley (David Hutchinson) and Stella (Jenny Skiffington).

N. SCOTT TRIMBLE/The Columbian

Two steer 'Streetcar' into spring

Clark College, Artists Repertory Theatre each to present version

By BRETT OPPEGAARD
for The Columbian

Before picking this season's plays, Clark College theater director Dan Anderson met with professor Lisa Abbott to brainstorm ways to avoid the "Proof" goof of two years ago.

That was when the college and another local company produced the same play within blocks of each other at the same time. Anderson and Abbott reviewed what they knew was being planned by other troupes. They forecast what standard fare might be due to reappear, and they tried to pick unusual pieces that would be hits: "The Underpants," by Steve Martin; "Jesus Christ Super-

star," by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice; and "A Streetcar Named Desire," by Tennessee Williams.

Williams won the Pulitzer Prize for drama in 1948 for his piece, but it hadn't been performed locally — at least by professionals — in at least two decades. Yet soon after Clark College published its season, Anderson learned that the area's second-largest professional theater company, Artists Repertory Theatre, also planned a version of the show during an overlapping run.

The coincidences became more statistically staggering as the biggest professional company in the area, Portland Center Stage, an-

nounced it would mount a version of "The Underpants" at the same time as Clark, and a Broadway tour of "Jesus Christ Superstar" booked its run through the area, once again right when Clark was producing its show.

"It's a very weird stroke of luck," Anderson acknowledged.

Not necessarily bad, though.

Two community theater companies producing the same work in this county at the same time, like when it happened with "Proof," typically doesn't bode well for either.

But when professionals in Portland coincide with Clark, which hasn't happened often, the results have been surprisingly positive for

the college.

Anderson said this counter-intuitive concept first clicked with him when the Broadway tour of "Evita" announced it would come through Portland in the mid-1990s at the same time as Clark's presentation.

He imagined the worst. He thought it would decimate his audiences. Instead, the heavy advertising by the Broadway troupe seemed to create a boost of interest that filled Clark's seats. This season only adds evidence that such coincidence boosts Clark's audiences.

Clark College has had a record-setting year, Anderson said, selling out almost every performance.

"Maybe ours looks like a better

See STREETCAR/ON PAGE F12

If you go

■ **What:** Artists Repertory Theatre presents "A Streetcar Named Desire," by Tennessee Williams.

■ **When:** Through May 18, with performances at 7:30 nightly, except Mondays, with shows at 2 p.m. Sundays.

■ **Where:** Portland's Artists Repertory Theatre, 1515 S.W. Alder St.

■ **Cost:** \$20 to \$47.

■ **Information:** 503-241-1278 or www.artistsrep.org.

STREETCAR

Continued from Page F11

bargain," he said. "It's been one of the best seasons, if not the best season, we've ever had."

"A Streetcar Named Desire," the final show for Clark before summer break, contrasts two of America's most iconic characters in Blanche DuBois and Stanley Kowalski, memorably played in the 1951 movie by Vivien Leigh and Marlon Brando.

DuBois, no longer the Southern belle of her youth, moves in to a cheap New Orleans apartment with her sister, Stella, Kowalski's wife, bringing tragedy for the trio with her.

Clark College is taking some risks with its production of the play, which runs May 2-17 in the Decker Theatre.

Clark's production will enact the emotional peaks of the piece, including physical



Stanley and Stella (Mic Matarrese and Val Landrum) turn up the heat while Blanche (Andrea Frankle) watches from a distance in Artists Repertory Theatre's production of "A Streetcar Named Desire," by Tennessee Williams, which tells the story in a series of flashbacks from the perspective of the institutionalized Blanche.

OWEN CAREY/Artists Repertory Theatre

fight and a rape, which typically take place off stage, said Abbott, the director.

"It is an extremely violent play. It's also a play about some really passionate relationships, and we're going to show that as well," Abbott said. "I'm not going to back away from the reality being presented. I'm not trying to make it comfortable for our audiences."

Artists Rep's approach, envisioned by director Jon

Kretzu, is to stage the story as a series of flashbacks from the perspective of the institutionalized DuBois, basically starting where the play and film end and looking backward. Workers in the asylum become characters from her past.

Kretzu said he chose the concept to try to shed some of the story's iconic baggage, while giving fans of the play a way to see it fresh.

Kretzu considers the piece

one of the top five greatest American plays, particularly strong in its presentation of an author's poetic sensibility, apparent in other works such as "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" and "The Glass Menagerie."

"Williams writes like no one else," Kretzu said. "And this play is really the perfect balance of everything he ever set out to do."

As for the coinciding Clark College production, which

closes on the same weekend, May 17-18, Kretzu said that Artists Rep has had the same sort of situation develop several times with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, Ore.

Parallel artistic efforts have worked to his group's advantage in the past as well, he said.

"I hope it would create an interest in (Clark's audience) to see another production," he said. "The more the merrier."