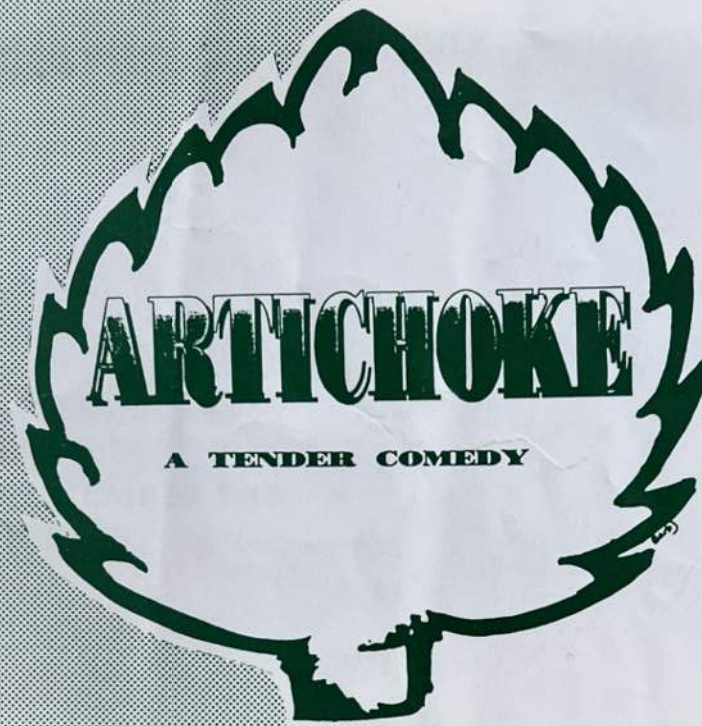




this side of the
hill players

presents



by
joanna
glass

directed
by
roxane
eppes

ARTICHOKE

by joanna glass
directed by roxane eppes

cast

in order of appearance

jake•michael sellers

archie•al murphy

margaret morley•catharine miles

walter morley•larry bostow

lily agnes•elizabeth luna

gramps•paul anable

gibson m^cfarland•buddy kutchinsky

synopsis of scenery

place•the saskatchewan prairie

time•summer

act I • mid-july

act II • three days later

scene II • labor day

THERE WILL BE A FIFTEEN MINUTE INTERMISSION
BETWEEN ACT I AND ACT II

crew

director•roxane eppes
assistant director•kim wright
stage manager•connie thompson

set design•chuck danskin, paul anable
set artistry•chuck danskin, david harvey
lighting design•paul anable, will eppes
prop mistress and set decor•virginia anable
lighting operator•cathy m^cneal
sound• david johansen,
set construction•chuck danskin
special construction•paul anable terry
costumes•bev engel ramseyer
costume assistants•mary danca, card madder
hair and make-up•cate callanta, michael sellers
make-up assistant•rose paglia
props assistants•betty stone, bob stone
set and paint crew•stan aitken, paul anable,
virginia anable, brad barker, chuck
danskin, ian danskin, roxane eppes, will
eppes, david harvey, david johansen,
roslyn ramsey, connie thompson, kim wright
posters•barb jernigan
programs•christopher thompson
ad sales•sandy bostow
photographer•michael wong
publicity•stan aitken, larry bostow, roxane eppes,
david harvey, connie thompson, stacy
trevenon, kim wright
front of house•stan aitken, betty ralphs
gala•sue heckman, lorna wong
gala sponsored by•aldo giusti of Giusti Farms

USHERS

majorie black, sandy bostow, gail clark, jacob
courts, mary danka, will eppes, linda eskew-
danka, souix gracier, jim houha, david keane,
karen keane, sue murphy, rosyn ramsey, lennon
smith, stacey trevenon, jeremy voas, tamara voas,
michele van hetenrick

'Artichoke' tense, emotional, relevant

By JILL MASTRULL BIAGIO
Half Moon Bay Review

Review

This Side of the Hill Players serve up a heaping plate of emotion in their production of "Artichoke," running now through June 27 on the Montara stage.

Drawing on a symbol well known to Coastsiders, "Artichoke" peels away the feelings and memories of its characters — getting to the "heart" of things layer by prickly layer — in a raw exploration of marital strife and sexual politics, trust and betrayal, suffering and survival.

The themes are not new, but playwright Joanna Glass presents them forcefully. Set on a 500-acre Saskatchewan farm in the late 1960s, her story places Margaret and Walter Morley in what Walter calls the "longest stalemate in the history of man and woman."

Margaret (Catharine Miles) has spurned her husband sexually for 15 long years, in retribution for

Walter's affair with a "water witch" who assisted them when their well went dry. The nomadic witch left the product of her illicit union with Walter — a daughter, Lily Agnes — on the Morleys' doorstep.

Humiliated but following the example of her father, who raised an orphaned boy, Margaret accepts Walter's illegitimate baby. But she neither forgets nor forgives her husband's transgression.

"Walter sinned long ago and Margaret rose to the occasion," Gramps (Paul Anable) says of his daughter. Stubborn and angry, Margaret has relegated her husband (Larry Bostow) to sleep permanently in the smokehouse, but remains as the devoted mother and keeper of the hearth.

During Saturday's performance,

Miles portrayed Margaret with a poignant combination of wrath and tenderness. Bostow was also strong in the part of

Walter — equally as proud, unremorseful and furious as his wife.

The sexual "scandal" of the Morley household was narrated, matter-of-factly, by two endearing old-timers who live down the road from the Morleys. The set and lighting were cleverly used to depict the two households on one stage, and Michael Sellers and Al Murphy were wonderful as the well-meaning Jake and Archie.

The sexual tension explodes when Margaret's foster-brother arrives. Desperately lonely, Margaret latches onto Gibson McFarland (TSOTHP newcomer Buddy Kutchinsky), the orphan raised as her brother.

Gibson stands in stark contrast to the farmers. A doctor of philosophy and university professor in Vancouver, Gibson is a cerebral man troubled by existential angst.

He comes to the Saskatchewan prairie seeking the proverbial pastoral summer, and Margaret comes to him seeking romance.

Kutchinsky captures Gibson's struggle, as he resists, acquiesces, and is finally drawn down into the Morley's moral battle.

Paul Anable turns in a touching performance as the noble Gramps, who loves his daughter and foster son but silently censures their alliance. Elizabeth Luna hits the mark as the ephemeral Lily Agnes, the bastard daughter who must wear a hat so her thoughts don't "shoot off in all directions."

From casting to set decoration, music and the playbills, director Roxane Eppes masterfully weaved her vision into every detail of the play.

"Artichoke" is riveting, relevant, unsettling, and ultimately inspiring. It bears a refreshing honesty and a timeless message. Highly recommended.



Photo courtesy of Michael Wong

Catharine Miles and Buddy Kutchinsky star in TSOTHP's latest production "Artichoke."

'Artichoke' flourishes on coast

By BARBARA BLADEN

Times Lively Arts Writer

"Artichoke" already a Coast-side symbol, isn't the eating kind in this production by This Side of the Hill Players in the Montara Gardens Theater.

It's a tender comedy by Joanna Glass about a dysfunctional marriage.

"Artichoke" refers to Gibson McFarland, a college professor who specializes in 18th century literature with an emphasis on Alexander Pope. He also writes books and has come to spend the summer with his adoptive family.

He's suffering something of a mid-life crisis with writer's block and the nagging feeling that his life's work is irrelevant. He is seeking solace by connecting with the only family he's ever known.

This includes former town mayor Gramps, who adopted him as a frightened, lonely child of 8; Gramps' daughter Margaret, her husband Walter and their foundling daughter, Lily Agnes, a spindly 6-foot-tall 15-year-old who defines her existence by the rules of Emily Post.

Lily Agnes insists the table be set correctly, frets over the proper way to introduce herself and always wears a straw hat to keep herself contained.

These are hard-working, no-nonsense, close-to-the-earth Midian prairie farm folk.

They're not used to dealing with someone like McFarland, a complex, multi-faceted personality and intellectual phiz that make him seem an outsider even though he's lived in the same town. They can't accept the social ties that bind the

What This Side of the Hill

Players' production of Joanna Glass' "Artichoke"

Where Montara Gardens

Theater, Sixth and LeConte streets, Montara

When 8 p.m. Friday, Saturday

Price \$10

Call 726-1598

When Margaret learned that Walter had fathered a baby by a visiting water witch, she banned him to sleep in the smokehouse for 15 years and turned all her love on the baby, who was abandoned by her real mother. Margaret named the baby Lily Agnes and reared her as her own.

McFarland and Margaret grew up as brother and sister. There was always a stronger-than-friendship tie between them that culminates in a brief love affair between the sex-starved Margaret and the gentle, poetic professor.

When the showdown comes between the unfulfilled Margaret; her jealous husband, who openly visits a whore in the next town once a month; and the philosophical intruder, the pulse of the land has a stronger pull than romance and adventure.

Margaret and Walter reconcile in accord with Alexander Pope's line, "to err is human, to forgive divine." They can forgive each other now because both have sinned and recognize their interdependence.

What McFarland doesn't understand is their connection with the land, a deeply ingrained passion for tilling the soil and rejoicing in the harvest. While they feed the chickens and clean the barn, he admires the sunset.

"In Margaret's eyes, he's an

artichoke and we're all turnips," the two old hayseed neighbors, Jake and Archie, ruminate over their morning coffee and gossip. The two are reminiscent of the two Texas radio hosts in "Greater Tuna" as they sit in their cramped farmhouse kitchen onstage to the side of the Morley household and humorously comment on their neighbors' goings-on in true cracker-barrel style.

Roxane Eppes has directed with crisp assurance although the play should be consistently treated as a cautionary Gothic tale and not as a realistic view of prairie life in Saskatchewan. Spotting characters who have already been identified is unnecessary. Bursts of anger and recrimination are forced and don't flow out of the situations.

Catharine Miles as Margaret and Larry Bostow as Walter are better in their quieter, reflective moments than when they are yelling at each other.

Paul Anable as Gramps lends an air of calm and wisdom to the hostilities.

Elizabeth Luna draws a poignant portrait of the eccentric teen-ager, but her movements should be tentative and measured rather than mincing. She has an appealing voice as the unschooled, book-taught illegitimate youngster.

Buddy Kutchinsky strikes just the right tone as the intellectual Gibson McFarland, who reconciles his role in life by the end of the summer, resumes his writing and serves as the catalyst in rejuvenating the bizarre marriage of two stubborn, proud friends.

Michael Sellers and Al Murphy as the Greek choristers Jake and Archie offer much of the needed wit to the bittersweet comedy-drama.

Playwright Joanna Glass was living in Oakland when her play had its 1978 West Coast premiere at the Barksley Stage Company.