
The 2004 Abbie Awards honored the following actors from Arthur: The Hunt

Abilene Reporter News:

Lead Actress (Non-Musical)

Kelly Haseltine, Winner, for Morgan

Supporting Actress (Non-Musical)

Allison Organ, Nominee, for Gwenhwyfar

‘The Hunt’ pleases some, confuses others

By Brien Murphy / Reporter-News Staff Writer

July 10, 2004

The new drama, “Arthur: The Hunt,” as one character says, is “a grand story worth the tellin’” – but perhaps with slight tweaking.

Playwright Jeff Berryman’s “Arthur: The Hunt” made its world premiere Friday at the Abilene Shakespeare Festival. It has murder, romance, intrigue, heroes and villains. Some in the audience seemed to love it, but others wondered aloud if anyone else was confused.

Based on the legend of King Arthur, the drama begins with dangerous political forces choosing sides to determine who might be the one High King to unite Britain’s loosely affiliated clans. Except for evil, power-hungry Cadwallan (Ben Jeffrey, nicely stepping out of his usual good-guy roles), we aren’t always sure which side the characters are on.

When we meet young Arthur (Andrew Young), he’s studying for the priesthood and is surprised to learn he may be the one chosen to lead. Things get more complicated when the would-be priest falls for the plucky Morgan (Kelly Haseltine, intriguing as usual in an emotionally demanding role).

Berryman, a former Abilenian, wisely broke up the long discussions of coalescing and dissolving alliances with swordfights, a charming romantic scene and subtle jokes. Act II’s focus on Arthur’s realization that he’s meant for big things – and big sacrifices – seemed to register with people sitting near me.

Act I, however, required close attention to learn who represents which clan, and why this person was angry at that person. It all made sense in the end, but I got the sense not everyone followed a plot in which Camelot and Sir Lancelot are never mentioned.

New King Arthur drama to debut tonight

By Brien Murphy / Reporter-News Staff Writer

July 9, 2004

Hundreds of people will see the world debut at the Abilene Shakespeare Festival of playwright Jeff Berryman’s new drama, “Arthur: The Hunt.”

Because he’s so busy, however, Berryman won’t be one of them.

The former Abilene Christian University professor – now a Seattle actor, writer and teacher – will attend a screenwriting workshop in Los Angeles throughout the run of “Arthur: The Hunt” at the festival.

He also has his hands full writing novels, more plays about King Arthur, teaching, and acting in the occasional play in Seattle or taking his one-man shows on the road.

“As I look to the future, I think of myself as a storyteller,” Berryman said.

A lot of Berryman’s time these days revolves around finding new ways to tell the story of King Arthur, the British king most popularly known for his Knights of the Round Table and uniting factions of his country.

“Arthur: The Hunt” is the second of seven to nine plays Berryman plans to write about Arthur, and focuses on Arthur’s realization of who he is and what is in store for his future. Berryman’s plan for the series is to set the stories in the fifth century – much earlier than the popular musical “Camelot” – and present the characters as less mythic, and more human.

Berryman said even though the story is hundreds of years old, the struggle to assemble a thriving, functional country is playing out each day in the news.

“If you look at what’s going on in Iraq today, there are these individuals, the new prime minister, the people at the head of this new government, as well as the rebel insurgents – these people are under incredible pressures. They have families. They have dreams. They may even be in love. Who knows, they may die before the sun sets tonight. That’s what’s going on in these Arthur plays,” Berryman said.

As director Adam Hester and his cast rehearsed “Arthur: The Hunt” the past few weeks, they talked with Berryman by speaker phone about the play’s story, structure and chronology of events. As the actors went through the scenes, they uncovered a few places where more exposition, or shifting the order of scenes, helped improve the story’s flow.

“In college theater, you do a lot of the classics,” said Ben Jeffrey (Cadwallan). “It’s great to say, ‘This is our baby.’ We get to take a fresh script and mold it.”

ACU plans to enter “Arthur: The Hunt” in the American College Theatre Festival during the 2004-05 school year – which would give Berryman the chance to see his creation for the first time.

“I WILL make time to see that incarnation,” Berryman said.



Jose Liming/Reporter-News

Andrew Young (Arthur) and Kelly Haseltine (Morgan) perform in Jeff Berryman's "The Hunt," which is playing in Culp Theatre on the ACU campus.

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Theater Notes

What: "Arthur: The Hunt" (drama).

When: 7:30 p.m. Sunday, 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, 7:30 p.m. Thursday and July 17.

Where: Culp Theatre, inside the Williams Performing Arts Center, Abilene Christian University.

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How much: Free, but tickets MUST be reserved in advance by calling (325) 674-2787, and picked up in advance at the ACU Theatre box office at the Williams Performing Arts Center. Patrons not seated 15 minutes before showtime may miss the show.

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Contact arts/entertainment writer Brien Murphy at murphyb@reporternews.com or 676-6760.