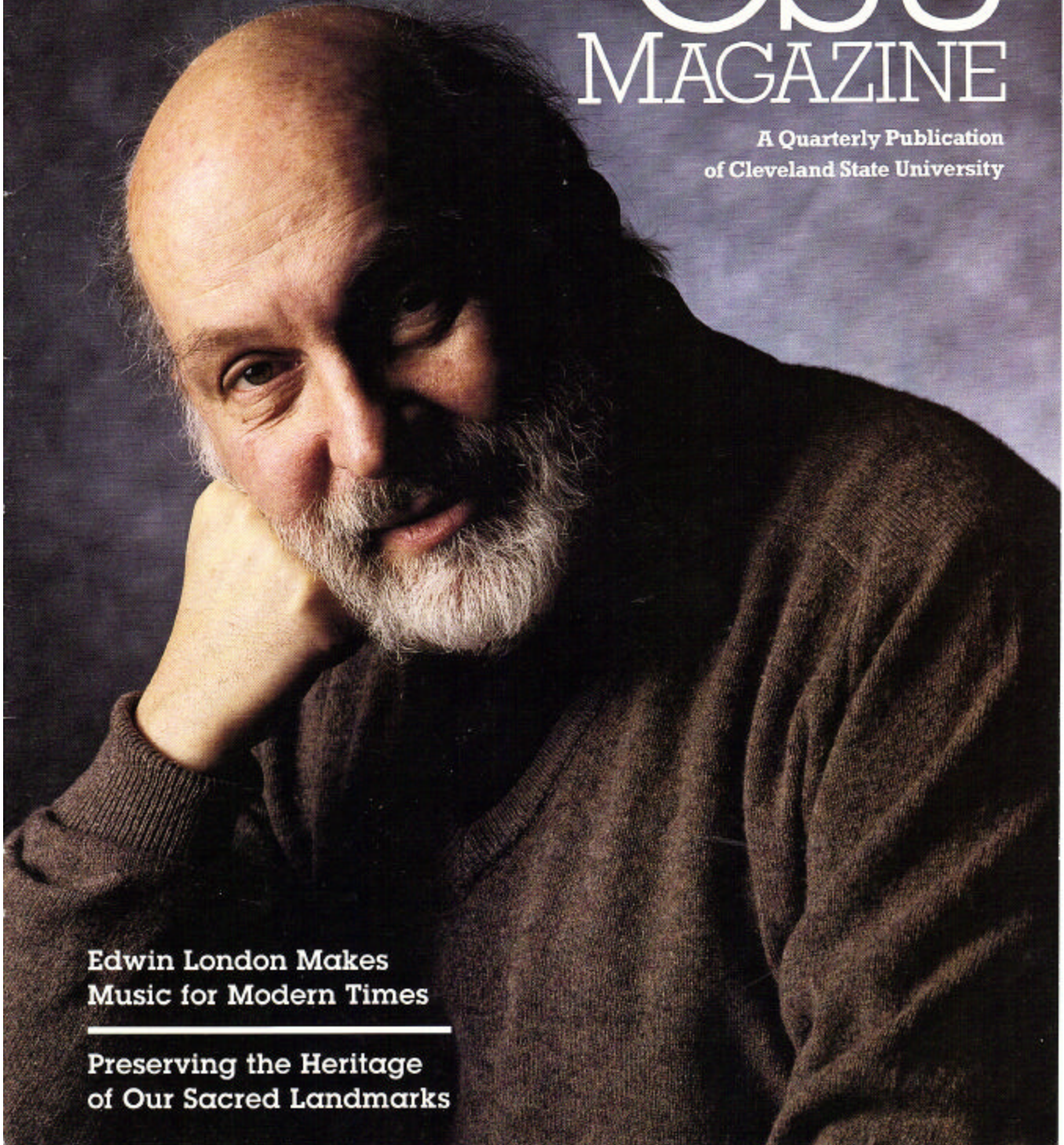


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A black and white portrait of Edwin London, a man with a full white beard and balding head, resting his chin on his hand. He is wearing a dark sweater. The background is dark and textured.

**Edwin London Makes
Music for Modern Times**

**Preserving the Heritage
of Our Sacred Landmarks**

CSU CLOSEUP

MINDS BEHIND THE MAGIC

A combination of style and vision make CSU's theater program one of Cleveland's theatrical highlights.

By Matt Weiland

In many ways, Cleveland's college theater programs are the city's version of off-Broadway, providing fresh alternatives to the steady diet of touring musicals that travel through town from month to month.

They are not only the training ground for fresh talent, but the life blood of theater in general, keeping it near the artistic edge with challenging works and daring productions. And the creative minds behind CSU's theater program have maintained this tradition, manifesting it into some of the area's most innovative theater in the past two decades.

The triad responsible, Joseph J. Garry, Jr., Eugene Hare, and Reuben Silver, each contribute a unique vision with a distinctive style that combine to make for one of the most eclectic programs, both scholastically and artistically, in the region. In a city steeped in theatrical tradition, that is no small achievement.

Artistically, the program's strength lies in its variety. Any single season can venture in venue from contemporary off-Broadway to the classical stage to an environmental extravaganza.

Yet, the variety is not only the elixir that vitalizes the program, but essentially the characteristic that defines its purpose and guides its course as well.

"The premise for a season relies on diversity," says Garry. "We make a point each year to stage an experimental work, a

classic — perhaps one that is lost or forgotten but which merits a second look — and a contemporary play, maybe an unknown work by an important author."

The present season exemplifies this philosophy. Eugene Hare directed "La Ronde" in September, a Viennese romantic comedy by Arthur Schnitzler, which was followed in November by Reuben Silver's staging of Edgar Lee Masters' rural drama "Spoon River Anthology." Both plays were set in the early 20th century, both satirical social commentaries, and both different in structure and perspective.

A collection of Sam Shepherd works, "Roads to Nowhere," was directed in January by alumnus Dave Brooks, a technical director with the Cleveland Opera. Garry followed in February with his staging of "Savages," a controversial drama by Christopher Hampton, dealing with the genocide of Brazilian Indians.

In May, guest director Paul Brown of the Cleveland Play House will direct the world premiere of "Hamburger Hamlet" by Rupert Holmes, author of the Tony Award winning adaptation of Dickens' "Mystery of Edwin Drood." The play deals with a class of kindergarten children, hidden away during a nuclear holocaust, and their life 30 years later as the only survivors on earth.

Marianne Evett, theater critic for the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, believes the program and the minds behind it have made a significant contribution to the theatrical craft.

"Joe, Reuben and Gene each bring a style that is uniquely their own," Evett says. "Joe (Garry) has a style that is noticeable wherever he goes." His talents especially shine when he undertakes the large scale, often exotic, productions, such as this year's "Savages," or past successes like the sensually mystic "The Arabian Night" and the environmental-theatrical journey of "Conference of the Birds."

"Artists have to be aware of the process," says Garry, referring to his own theater philosophy as well as the training of theater students. "We try to offer as many different points of view and methods of working as we can through our own faculty, as well as importing guest artists, and helping student artists realize their own particular visions."

Silver's style, Evett points out, is more Stanislavsky-oriented, with a special knack for the realism of American drama, as he has exhibited in plays such as Arthur

Miller's "A View from the Bridge" and Tennessee Williams' "The Glass Menagerie."

"I think that theater, at its best, offers tremendous insight into human behavior, philosophies, psychologies, emotions, and even vocabulary," says Silver. "Playwrights are great thinkers, and I'm attracted to the ideas of plays, which I guess I find more in naturalistic or realistic dramas than in comedies or musicals."

A childhood actor with the Yiddish-language theater in Detroit, Silver believes theater is an art form in which all other art forms are encompassed, the literary with the performing, the visual with the aural, the technical with the directorial.

Someone who combines and shifts between the various forms is Eugene Hare, who came to CSU in 1978. The production designer for CSU and the Ohio Light Opera worked with Garry on a variety of projects while he was at the Cleveland Play House. He has supervised stage design, costuming, lighting and technical work, but, not too surprisingly, prefers the duties of directing, which he finds the most fulfilling.

"I like the control," he says with a wry smile. "From concept to completion, everything is under the power of the director. I enjoy the total unified process of the production."

His tastes run from the historical to the classical to children's theater and puppetry. He likes T.S. Eliot, Tennessee Williams and Shakespeare and sometimes brings these favorites together to expose his students to the best from each genre.

The program, says Evett, is also a prime outlet for alternative theater as well. "They've done a good job of staging works by talented authors that might otherwise not be seen in the Cleveland area. And in doing so they have chosen plays that challenge students and provide for a broad range of experience."

CSU students are at once the backbone, the purpose and the inspiration of the program. They must not only be bright, they must be adaptable as well, able to learn quickly and assume the duties and responsibilities accompanying such aspects as scenery, costuming, lighting and technical effects, all in addition to acting and directing.

Ironically, it is the intimacy of the program that enables it to provide the wide range of experience and ensuing adaptability. Because the department is

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE ZORC



Theater professors Reuben Silver (left), Eugene Hare and Joseph J. Garry, Jr. in the Studio Theatre

small, it offers students the opportunity to apply the classroom work and the theory of theater. It also gives faculty members a chance to observe the development of their students, something they find particularly fulfilling.

As the artistic aspects of the program continue to grow and diversify, the student benefits continue to develop as well. Ties have been strengthened between Cleveland State, the Playhouse Square Association and the Great Lakes Theater Festival, resulting in internships and artistic exchanges.

Perhaps the most significant relationship to be reaffirmed, though, is the one with the Cleveland Play House, a relationship that dates back to CSU's inception. A

recently revised agreement provides for more student internships, theater space for student productions and rehearsals and an exchange of costuming and technical equipment. The agreement, updated in 1987, also makes provisions for scholarships and fellowships, as well as offering discounted tickets to CSU students for various shows.

The factor that has had the greatest day to day impact on the program over the past couple years, however, is without a doubt the renovation of the Factory Theatre.

Renovated in 1987 at a price of \$1,725,000, the improvements included \$270,000 in state-of-the-art sound and lighting equipment as well as an air

conditioning system for summer classes, workshops and productions. The complex contains both the main-floor Factory Theatre and the upstairs Studio Theatre in addition to classroom space, a scenery construction shop, a costume shop, offices and lounges.

"The Factory Theatre is the best space in town," says Evett. "Because it's so flexible, it can become any world one envisions. It's just a big, black box that can be made into whatever one wants, whatever springs from the imagination of faculty and students."