Kennedy Theatre
1993-94 Season

Eric Overmyer's

ON THE VERGE

or The Geography of Yearning

December 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12 1993

Our annual **CHRISTMAS SALE** is here!
It starts on **November 26th** thru **December 23rd**.
Cookbooks, Children's and assorted
Gift books, Supplies, Backpacks, Calculators,
Jackets, Shorts, T-shirts, and many more gift
items will be on sale up to 20% off!

(nov.26 starts)

SPECIAL NIGHTS for Students, Faculty, Staff and Alumni. Shop between 4pm and 6:30pm and receive 10% off SALE and REGULAR sale prices.

TUESDAY
November 30th
4pm to 6:30pm
(Student Night)

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December 1st
4pm to 6:30pm
(Faculty, Staff, and Alumni Night)

merrY ChRistmaS!

(computers and software not included)

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(ends) **deC.23**

BookStorE HouRs:
MON to FRI - 8:15 to 4:45pm
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Kennedy Theatre Information

Tickets may be purchased at the Kennedy Theatre Box Office (10am—5pm, Monday through Friday) or charged by phone to Visa or Mastercard by calling the Box Office at 956-7655. Limited **wheelchair** and **disabled seating** is available for each performance. So that we can best serve you, those desiring such seating are asked to request it at the time tickets are ordered. Hearing impaired patrons may utilize TT communications with Box Office Staff by calling 956-7655.

Parking is available on the UHM campus for a nominal charge. Please allow at least 20 minutes to locate parking.

Late Arrivals will be seated at the discretion of the house manager and only during appropriate breaks in the program.

Programs printed in large type are available upon request. Please ask an usher.

Please remember that smoking and refreshments are not permitted inside Kennedy Theatre. Also, we ask that cellular phones and beepers be turned off while inside the auditorium and remind you that photography and recordings are not permitted during the performance.

Lost and found is located at the Box Office.

This program is printed on recycled paper.

The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
College of Arts and Humanities
Department of Theatre and Dance

presents

On the Verge
or
The Geography of Yearning

By **Eric Overmyer**

Directed by **Lurana Donnels O'Malley**

Scenic and Lighting Design by **Michelle L. Ojeda***

Costume Design by **Linda Yara***

Sound Design by **Sean T.C. O'Malley**

Dramaturg **M.W. Engler**

Technical Direction by **Mark Boyd**

*In partial fulfillment of the Master of Fine Arts Degree requirements in Design.

Produced through special arrangement
with Broadway Play Publishing, Inc.
357 West 20th Street.
New York, New York 10011.
The script to this play may be purchased through BPPI.

On the Verge received its professional premiere
on January 5, 1985,
at Center Stage, Baltimore, Maryland.

The Play

Act One

1. On the Verge
2. Taking Stock—or, On Sartorial Custom, Civil and Savage
3. Up and Over
4. The Mysterious Interior
5. Native Chop
6. High Tea—or, Many Parts are Edible
7. Ember Tales
8. An Apparition
9. Fort Apache
10. In the Jungle—The Mighty Jungle
11. A Prisoner in a Kaleidoscope
12. Not Quite Robert Lowell
13. Plot Thickener

INTERMISSION

Act Two

14. Fan Mail from the Future
15. The Starry Deep
16. Manna from Heaven—or, Among the Jesuits
17. Vintage Crystal
18. Woody's Esso
19. Paradise '55
20. Later That Same Evening
21. Go-Go Boots—or, Rock and Roll is Here To Stay
22. The Geography of Yearning

A lady an explorer? a traveler in skirts?
The notion's just a trifle too seraphic.
Let them stay and mind the babies, or hem our ragged shirts:
But they mustn't, can't and shan't
be geographic.

Punch 1839

Cast of Characters

Miss Mary Baltimore
Kate Wilson

Mrs. Fanny Cranberry
Laura D. Box

Miss Alexandra Cafuffle
Nancy Jill Sundberg

Alphonse, Grover, The Yeti, The Gorge Troll,
Mr. Coffee, Madame Nhu, Gus,
Nicky Paradise
Matthew Webster

The play begins in 1888.
In Terra Incognita.

Perhaps the imagination is on the verge of recovering its rights.

Andre Breton
(paraphrased by E.O.)

The performance on Saturday, December 4th will be signed for the hearing impaired by **Mike Lee** and **Michele Morris** with the support of the Gallaudet Center and the Aloha State Association of the Deaf.

From the Director

Eric Overmyer is one of our most exciting new American playwrights. As I approached his peculiarly delightful play, *On the Verge*, I turned for inspiration to the words of one of this country's most admired designers, Robert Edmond Jones.

> Imagine this little band of explorers, lost in wonder, on the shore of an unknown ocean. See their faces as the vision of a new world bursts upon them. A scene on the stage should give us the same sense of incredulity and wonder and delight. As we enter the theatre we too are on the threshold of a new experience. The curtain rises. The vision of a new world bursts upon us as it burst upon these voyagers of an earlier day. A new powerful life pervades the theatre. Our hearts beat with a wild hope. Is this what we have waited for? we ask. Shall we see at last? Shall we know?
>
> Robert Edmond Jones, *The Dramatic Imagination*. New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1941.

Here's to yetis and dirigibles! And to our adventures in the theatre, many more!

About the Playwright

Paul C. Castagno of the University of Alabama has described Eric Overmyer as "an alternative in the current American theatre [who offers] new dramaturgical approaches to the art and craft of dramatic writing" (1). Castagno points out that Overmyer emphasizes language and poetic rhythm to intensify what is being stated as opposed to creating individual characterizations through diction. Overmyer has remarked:

> It seems to me that each play demands its own language . . . that the theater is a place where language is paramount, and that is what makes it interesting. . . .I think American language is so astonishly rich because it is diverse. It keeps being fed by new cultures that come and join whatever this is—this semi-party, semi-riot—that is America, and is constantly renewing itself. (Raymond 1992)

Overmyer has served as an Associate Artist at Baltimore's Center Stage, where *On the Verge* premiered in 1985. Some of Overmyer's other works include: *Native Speech* (1983) which paints an apocalyptic landscape of the last gasps of Western civilization; *In a Pig's Valise* (1986), a musical detective thriller in the spirit of film noir; *In Perpetuity Throughout the Universe* (1989) a hyperbolic look at conservative paranoia; and *The Heliotrope Bouquet by Scott Joplin and Louis Chauvin* (1990), which Overmyer calls "a meditation about a piece of music and its making" (Raymond 1992, 25). Overmyer's television credits include *St. Elsewhere*, *The Days and Nights of Molly Dodd*, and MTV!

Most recently, Overmyer has been commissioned by The Honolulu Theatre for Youth as part of the New Generation Play Project to write a play for young audiences. In *DUKE KAHANAMOKU vs. the surfnappers*, Eric Overmyer brings his unique style and point of view to the story of one of Hawaii's most beloved heroes. The play encompasses swimming and surfing, heroism and facing adversity, and what it might be to grow up in Hawaii.

M.W. Engler
Dramaturg

References:

Castagno, Paul C. 1991. "Desultory Structures: Language as Presence in the Works of Overmyer, Wellman, and Jenkin." *Text and Presentation* 11: 1-7.

Raymond, Gerald. 1992. "Making Words Music." *Theater Week* March 22-28: 24-27.

Behind the Scenes

WHAT IS A DRAMATURG?

"Dramaturgy, I believe, is a process of making sense both for production and for the audience."
Peter Hay

The first dramaturg was eighteenth-century German essayist and playwright Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, who served as an in-house critic for the short-lived Hamburg National Theatre. Although the theatre failed, Lessing's essay collection "Hamburg Dramaturgy" lived on to be a classic body of theoretical considerations inspired by actual productions.

Dramaturgs have long been an integral part of European professional theatre, and have in the past fifteen years made a considerable impact at regional and university theatres in the United States. Sometimes called the literary manager or adviser, the dramaturg works hand-in-hand with the director. Her or his many contributions fall into four categories: (1) **work with the play text itself** (choosing scripts for a season of plays, translating the play or choosing a translation, analyzing the script, suggesting changes in an original script); (2) **research** (into the playwright's life and work, into the historical period in which the play was composed, into the historical period in which the play is set, into the production history of the play); (3) **advising the production team** (participating in the formulation of a production concept, assisting with casting, serving as a second eye to the director, serving as a resource for the actors and designers); (4) **informing the audience** (participating in publicity decisions, writing program copy, preparing displays or exhibits, leading discussions, and giving lectures or organizing symposia to accompany the production).

For example, M.W. Engler, dramaturg for *On the Verge*, attended design meetings, auditions, and rehearsals, helped with the script's copious vocabulary, made a world map for our actors to show them all the places mentioned in the play, wrote program copy, contributed to the lobby display, and researched such diverse phenomena as the New Woman and the Esso sign. Several other productions at UHM have included faculty or student dramaturgs, and we are now offering academic credit for this work. University theatre, which blends the "practical" and the "academic," is an ideal soil to nurture the dramaturg-director relationship, and several universities in the U.S. now offer Masters degrees in dramaturgy.

I have worked as a dramaturg and with dramaturgs; I place great stock in their potential to change American theatre for the better. We need more people whose job it is to ask "Why?—Why this play at this time for this audience?" In the broadest sense, the dramaturg's job is that of "translation": the art of bringing a playtext to a particular community in an effective and meaningful way.

Lurana Donnels O'Malley
Assistant Professor

ON THE VERGE Who's Who

Victor Herbert (1859-1924) American musician, composer, and conductor particularly known for his comic operas, including *Babes in Toyland* (1903).

Robert Lowell (1917-1977)
American poet whose works include *Life Studies* (1959) and *The Dolphin* (1973).

Madame Nhu (1924—)
Ngo Dinh Nhu, the wife of Vietnamese President Diem's brother, she acted as the first lady of Viet Nam. Speaking only French and dressing in a flashy manner, she earned a reputation as a power-hungry "Dragon Lady" (a derogatory term applied to strong Asian women). After a 1963 incident in which anti-Diem Buddhist monks were immolating themselves, she infamously called them a "barbecue," proclaiming "Let them burn and we shall clap our hands."

Mrs. Butterworth (1960—)
Originally created as a "convenience product" which would combine butter and syrup, she went national in 1963. According to the Van Den Bergh Foods Company, she is not intended to be a portrait of a real person or a particular ethnic group, but represents wholesome, old-fashioned goodness.

Satchel Paige (1906-1982)
American baseball player who played for more than two decades in the "Negro Leagues," pitching 250 shut-outs. In 1948 when the racial barrier was broken, he played for the Cleveland Indians and the St. Louis Browns. In his memoirs, *How To Keep Young*, he wrote "Don't look back, something may be gaining on you."

ON THE VERGE LEXICON

antediluvian *adj.* 1. of the time before the Biblical Flood 2. very old, old-fashioned, or primitive

anthropophagi *n.* a man eater

antipodes *n.* 1.any two places directly opposite each other on the earth 2. a place on the opposite side of the earth; in British usage, New Zealand and Australia 3. two opposite or contrary things

ecdysiast *n.* one occupied with a stripteaser

echolalia *n.* the automatic repetition by someone of words spoken in his presence, esp. as a symptom of mental disorder.

empyrean *n.* 1. the highest heaven; specif., a) among the ancients, the sphere of pure light or fire b) among Christian poets, the abode of God 2. the sky; the celestial vault; firmament

sartorial *adj.* 1. of tailors or their work 2. of clothing or dress esp. men's

tribadism *n.* homosexuality between women; lesbianism

welkin *n.* the vault of heaven, the sky, or the upper air

Historical Notes

Eric Overmyer loosely modeled his characters after actual figures, the real Victorian-era women who stepped out of their societal roles to travel to different lands. These European and American women left behind husbands, brothers, sisters, and children to pursue their own adventurous callings to the Middle East, Asia, Africa, South America, and the Pacific Rim. Many of the women were scientists, some were artists, and all were writers, who penned tales of their exploits for newspapers, public lectures, and book-length studies. Although Overmyer did not fashion Mary, Fanny, and Alex after particular historical women, he did draw inspiration from the remarkable lives of these explorers. In his words, "The spirit of the lady travelers inspired *On the Verge*, and that spirit is the play's true concern: the quality of yearning, courage, and imagination."

For further reading on the Victorian women travelers, see:

- Allen, Alexandra. *Travelling Ladies*.
- Birkett, Dea. *Spinsters Abroad: Victorian Lady Explorers.*
- Middleton, Dorothy. *Victorian Lady Travellers.*
- Miller, Luree. *On Top of the World: Five Women Explorers in Tibet.*

About the real life Victorian Lady Explorers

Isabella Lucy Bird (1831-1904)
Isabella was born in Yorkshire to a prosperous middle class family. She has been called the most dramatic of the Victorian lady travellers. In 1873, she set out for Hawaii from Australia. Like most of her fellow sojourners, Miss Bird held strong opinions about woman's "civilizing mission," but could occasionally learn a thing or two from the local population. For example, in Hawaii, she was introduced to the Hawaiian riding dress, a pair of big baggy trousers gathered at the ankle and covered by a long split skirt. Sporting these, she explored the archipelago, which "proved the easiest, safest, and most enjoyable pursuit imaginable" (Middleton 22). In her years of travelling, she also visited China, India, and the United States where she rode astride in the Rocky Mountains. She was fond of saying, "Nothing annoying in this!"

Alexandra David-Neel (1868-1969)
Alexandra was born at Sainte-Mande, a suburb of Paris. Her father was a political activist and her mother was the daughter of a university professor. Alexandra recalled that as a child she was bounced on the knee of Victor Hugo. She was a prodigious traveller to the East. Disguised as a Tibetan beggar she lived and traveled among the peoples of China and Tibet. As a Buddhist scholar, she was welcomed in homes and monasteries. Alexandra was the first European woman to enter the Forbidden City of Lhasa.

Mary Kingsley (1862-1900)
Her father was often away, her mother often ill, and her brother ineffective. Mary travelled throughout Africa where she prodded hippopotami and took marine soundings with her umbrella. When speaking of her cannibal fans, Miss Kingsley stated, "We each recognized that we belonged to that same section of the human race with whom it is better to drink than to fight" (Middleton 149). She died early at 38. Her last wish was to be buried at sea, a traveller to the end.

May French Sheldon (1848-1936)
Born to a wealthy Southern family, May's father was a mathematician and a plantation farmer. Her mother was referred to as "the celebrated Dr. Elizabeth J. French" (Middleton 90). In 1891 May departed for Africa, a voyage which earned her a membership in the Royal Geographical Society. While on Kilimanjaro, she was confronted by a Masai warrior who hurled a spear at her yelling "Wow! Wow! Wow!" May bellowed back "Wow! Wow! Wow!" while liberating the spear for the curious back home. True to tradition, Mrs. Sheldon always packed an outfit in which to astonish the tribal chiefs—a blonde wig and a court gown spangled with artificial jewels! May French Sheldon's African nickname, Bebe Bwana, is Swahili for "Lady Boss."

Fanny Bullock Workman (1859-1925)
Fanny and her husband, both Americans, were rich and energetic, visiting the Karakoram range of the Himalayas eight times between 1889 and 1912. Fanny was part of the late Victorian "New Woman" phenomenon. A New Woman wore sensible clothes, aspired to a professional career, and was broad-minded in matters of art and literature; she often smoked and nearly always bicycled; the New Woman believed in the woman's suffrage movement. Fanny was both observant and opinionated, and her comments were reinforced by her own photographs, for like many of the Victorian travelers she was a keen "Kodakist."

What happened in America in 1888?

Rochester, New York.
A new camera called a Kodak that makes photography simpler than ever before is marketed by George Eastman. It weighs about two pounds.

Washington, D.C., January 13th.
National Geographic Magazine is established, a magazine which disseminates geographical information of popular interest.

Des Moines, Iowa, May 15.
The Equal Rights Party nominates Belva Ann Lockwood for President. Lockwood was the first woman to argue a case before the Supreme Court.

Oregon, July 10th.
Union Pacific Railroad opens the first steel bridge on Pacific Coast to the public.

Pittsburgh, November 25th.
First commercial aluminum is made.

What happened in America in 1955?

Washington, D.C., January 19th.
President Eisenhower becomes the first president to conduct a televised news conference.

Washington, D.C., February 23rd.
The United Stays sends a small force of military advisors to South Vietnam because of the increased success of the pro-Communist forces operating in that Southeast Asian nation.

Hollywood, California, September 30th.
Actor James Dean, 24, is killed in a highway crash driving his Porsche to Salinas to compete in a race. This year, his films *East of Eden*, *Rebel Without a Cause*, and *Giant* come out.

Montgomery, Alabama, December 5th.
When the Cleveland Avenue bus pulls up at her stop, Rosa Parks sits at the back of the bus and is arrested for not giving her seat to a white man. A boycott of the city's buses is called for and the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. is chosen to head the publicity campaign.

Hollywood, California.
Marilyn Monroe is Hollywood's biggest draw. While at work on her new movie, *Some Like it Hot*, she divorces baseball hero Joe DiMaggio after a nine-month marriage.

New York, New York.
After winning six of the last seven World Series, the Yankees were beaten by the Brooklyn Dodgers.

Billboard's Top Five

Week of July 9, 1955

1. "Rock Around the Clock" (Bill Haley and the Comets)
2. "Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White" (Prez Prado)
3. "Blossom Fell/If I May" (Nat King Cole)
4. "Unchained Melody" (Les Baxter)
5. "Learnin' the Blues" (Frank Sinatra)

About the Company

Laura D. Box (Mrs. Fanny Cranberry) is in her first year as a Doctoral candidate in Asian Theatre. Laura received her Masters degree in Drama from San Diego State University. She recently performed in Late Night Theatre's production of *The Well of Horniness*.

M.W. Engler (Dramaturg) is a graduate student in Directing who recently directed *Forget Him* and *The Well of Horniness* in Kennedy's LAB Theatre. He is also an active member of "The Open House" performance network based here in Hawaii.

Jackie Jordan (Assistant Director/ Stage Manager) is a senior Theatre major. She was recently seen in both *Forget Him* and *The Well of Horniness*.

Nathan K. Lee (Properties Designer) is in his first year as a graduate student in Design. Nathan last performed in *Valley of the Doll's House* and recently designed for the Honolulu Theatre for Youth's Theatrefest.

Michelle L. Ojeda (Scenic and Lighting Designer) will receive her Master of Fine Arts Degree in Design this spring. Michelle frequently designs lights in the Kennedy LAB Theatre, last designing for the production of *Woyzeck*. She is considering pursuing a Doctoral degree in Asian Theatre.

Nancy Jill Sundberg (Miss Alexandra Cafuffle) is a Theatre major who was last seen in *Valley of the Doll's House*.

Matthew Webster (All other characters) received his Masters Degree from the University of New Mexico. This is his first year in the doctoral program for Youth Theatre. Matthew has directed and managed theatre productions in California and New Mexico.

Kate Wilson (Miss Mary Baltimore) hails from Australia where she works and teaches theatre and where her family resides. Kate is currently in the Doctoral program and is researching actor training. Last May she directed *A Toast to Melba* in Australia. In Hawaii she was last seen in Kennedy Theatre's *The Blind Giant is Dancing*.

Linda Yara (Costume Designer) will receive her Master of Fine Arts Degree in Design this spring. Linda last designed Kennedy Theatre's Mainstage production of the *Valley of the Doll's House*.

Production Staff

Assistant Director/ Stage Manager: Jackie Jordan

Assistant Stage Manager: John Lobo

Associate Technical Director: Gerald R. Kawaoka

Choreography: Gregg Lizenbery

Properties Design: Nathan K. Lee

Light Board Operator: Andrea Dolera

Sound Board Operator: John Lobo

Followspot Operators: Drew Sullivan

Wardrobe Crew Supervisor: Christephor Gilbert

Costume Crew: Peter Farstrup, Sujin Lee

Set Construction: Nathan K. Lee, Angela Wood Myers, Michelle L. Ojeda, Joseph Rial, Heyue Wang, Harry Wong III and students from 240 and 101

Stage Crew: George Cayetano, Andrew Tucker, Michael Wenzel

Slide Design: Mark Conching

African Mask Design: Joseph Rial

Costume Construction: Tammie Ackerman, Debra Blandin, Jennifer Kihara, Margaret McKea, Robin Moss, Lisa Ann M. Omoto, Evelyn Sarmiento, Jean Takabayashi

Box Office Supervisors: M. W. Engler, Heidi Schiller

Box Office Staff: Matthew Chang, Jackie Jordan, Michelle Parks, Kathy Welch

Poster Design: Rowen Tabusa, Office of University Relations

Program Design: Billie Ikeda, Center for Instructional Support

Photographers: Stephen Clear, Sean T. C. O'Malley

Season Brochure: Rowen Tabusa, Office of University Relations

Publicity Director: RKevin Doyle

Publicity Staff: Eric Schmiedl, John Tsukano, and students from 200E

Kennedy Theatre Manager: Marty Myers

House Manager/Program Editor: Alice Luhrmann

Front of House Staff: TanNa Young, Benly Legiman

Office Staff: Heather Carter, Carolyn Guira, Margaret Kepoo

Custodian: Christopher Chun

Acknowledgements: Heather Carter, Bonnie Cullum, John Donnels, RKevin Doyle, Linda Engelberg, Gina Gutierrez, Honolulu Theatre for Youth, Randall Morioka, Elly Nielsen, T.J. O'Malley

The Faculty and Staff

Faculty

Dennis Carroll *Chair*, Director of Graduate Studies, Playwriting, Directing

James R. Brandon Asian Theatre

Mark Boyd Technical Theatre, Lighting

Juli Thompson Burk Dramatic Literature, Theory, Directing

Glenn Cannon Acting, Directing, TV/Film

Joseph D. Dodd Director of Theatre, Scenic Design

Sandra Finney Director of Undergraduate Studies, Costume Design

Peggy Gaither Dance Production Coordinator, Modern Dance, Dance Composition

Sandra Hammond Director of Dance, Ballet, Dance History

Peggy Hunt Dance Outreach Coordinator, Modern Dance

Tamara Hunt Director of Children's Theatre, Creative Drama, Puppetry

Terence Knapp Acting, Directing, Voice

Gregg E.R. Lizenbery Modern Dance, Dance Kinesiology

Roger A. Long Asian Theatre, Acting

Lurana D. O'Malley Western Theatre History, Research

Judy Van Zile Dance Ethnology

Elizabeth Wichmann Director of Asian Theatre, Asian Theatre, Directing

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Shen Fuqing Music (Beijing Opera Techniques)

Shen Xiaomei Acting (Beijing Opera Techniques)

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Gerald R. Kawaoka Theatre Technician

RoseMarie McDonald Theatre Secretary

Charlotte Mitsutani Dance Secretary

Marty Myers Theatre Manager

Linda Yara Costume Shop Manager

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