

Theater students to present 'House of Blue Leaves' Oct. 3-6

10/03/01

"The House of Blue Leaves" by John Guare, to be performed Wednesday through Saturday (Oct. 3-6) by Alfred University theater students, was chosen last spring but couldn't be more apt in light of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Written in 1969 and first performed in 1971, "Blue Leaves" will be performed at 8 p.m. each night in the Miller Performing Arts Center. Director is Becky Prophet, professor of theater, with scenery by Earl T. Stephens and costumes by Jason L. Shattuck. "The play is loaded with wry observations about family life, religion, and responsibility as the audience is led through a maze of events in a New York city apartment on the day Pope Paul VI visited Yankee Stadium in 1965," Prophet said. Tickets are \$4 general admission, free for AU students, and \$2 for other students. Reservations are recommended; call (607) 871-2828. For advance tickets, visit the box office on the second floor of the Miller building, or if nobody is there, Room 10 in the basement; or call the reservation number. Artie Shaughnessy, zookeeper by trade and songwriter by dream, hides his crazy wife Bananas in a small, shabby, cold apartment. One morning before dawn, his son, who is AWOL from Fort Dix, NJ, arrives. As Artie and his girlfriend Bunny Flingus prepare to go watch the Pope's motorcade pass, other characters take refuge in the apartment -- three nuns who have been frozen out of seeing the Pope, the girlfriend of Artie's childhood friend turned movie producer, and a military MP. As the play expands to investigate questions of feminism, the conflict between a democratic society and a hierarchical religion, U.S. involvement in Vietnam, mental illness, violence, and a host of other issues that have continued to dog our time since the 1960s, the plot spirals out of control. Ronnie, son of Artie and Bananas, turns terrorist, not from politics, religion, or conviction but in search of power and fame. His plan to blow up the Pope in Yankee Stadium provides a parallel -- complete with differences -- with the plans of the Sept. 11 hijackers. Because of the play's implications, a post-production discussion featuring cast, audience, and crew will follow the Wednesday and Friday performances (Oct. 3 and 5.) "We have chosen to approach the play and the bombing incident contained within it as an unfortunate parallel, puny and pathetic by comparison with the real events of (Sept. 11) but exactly in the scale that the playwright seems to suggest," Prophet noted. "Ronnie's fanaticism has similar roots in blind hatred and has comparable results in violence as those of any group or individual, frustrated by a perceived lack of hearing, attention, or fame ... The hostility of people like Ronnie, the killers at Columbine, or the hijackers of aircraft may never be taken lightly or comically." Finally, she said, "we reaffirm that a play is a play ... (Such) a piece may have resonances in our society ... but art, right now, cannot presume to challenge or make sense of ... Sept. 11." She added, "In the years to come, we believe that theater and other art forms may be of assistance in sorting out ... ideas, new approaches and certainly feelings." Members of the cast are Chris Quinn, a sophomore from Millersville, MD; Joshua D. First (junior, Allegany, NY); Sarah M. Thomas (sophomore, Clark Summit, PA); Emily Tucker (senior, Ithaca, NY); Sarah E. Hagggett (sophomore, Fairport, NY); Lacy Holmes (freshman, University Heights, OH); Julia Shapiro (sophomore, West Nyack, NY); Chagmion Antoine (sophomore, Danbury, CT); J. Adam Matuszewski (freshman, Euclid, OH); Zachary Lind (freshman, Spence, NY); John Dunphy (junior, Red Bank, NJ); and Zachary Wickham (sophomore, Elma, NY.)