

SOUTHERN MARYLAND
WEEKEND

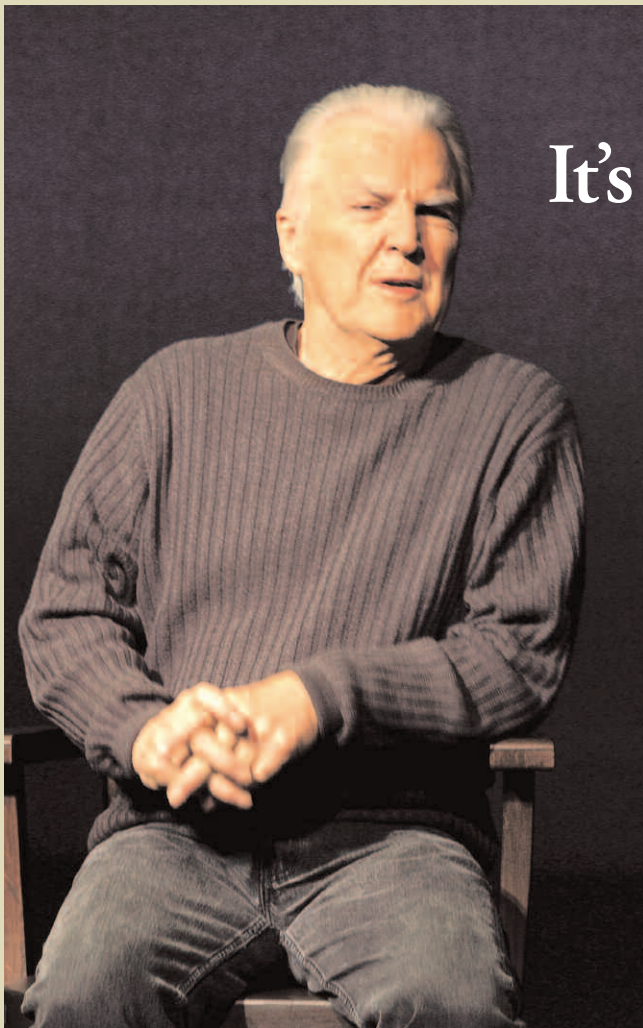
IT'S ALL DONE WITH MIRRORS

SOUTHERN MARYLAND Weekend

FRIDAY 04/17/09

Anthony Zerbe's

anyone lived in a pretty how town
(with up so floating many bells down)
spring summer autumn winter
he said his didn't and danced his did
— from anyone lived in a pretty how town'
by e.e. cummings



It's All Done With Mirrors'

■ One-man performance
at PTP Theater

Anthony Zerbe goes on tour every year. In 2009, he is doing performances of his one man show as well as college residencies with theatre students in five states. He's now into a his fourth month of near non-stop work.

On April 18 he will be in Maryland, taking the stage at Port Tobacco Players in LaPlata. He will be performing the poetry, speeches and writings from memory, by 20th Century American poet, painter, essayist, novelist and playwright e.e. cummings. Part of the performance includes a time with the audience for questions and discussion.

Zerbe calls the show *It's All Done With Mirrors*. He says he



e.e. cummings

named the show after a line from cummings play called HIM. The three-act play produced in 1928 was one of the first things by cummings that Zerbe read and Zerbe ran through a few lines on April 9, the words muffled by wind blowing through his iPhone. He and fellow travelers (including Ann Patrice Carrigan, Director of an artist's management agency called Poetry In Motion) were traveling from Elon, N.C. They stopped in Henderson, N.C. so

Zerbe could do a quick interview.

Zerbe has been in many movies, television shows and plays since breaking into the business in the 1960s. His performances of contemporary poetry, meanwhile, go back as far as his first film role as Dog Boy in the 1967 masterpiece, *Cool Hand Luke*.

Born in Long Beach, one online biography says he rejected the “surfer mentality” of his peers and went to New York to become an actor. He studied with Stella Adler and worked off-Broadway. Another early role for him was Duchy in *Will Penny*.

He played the leader of a cult in *The Omega Man*, a 1971 adaptation of Richard Matheson’s 1954 novel, “I Am Legend” and a henchman (Million Krest) in the 1989 James Bond film “License to Kill”. He has been in more than a dozen roles in which his character exploded, according to another biography. In 1976 he won an Emmy Award for “Outstanding Continuing Performance by a Support Actor in a Drama series” for his role as Lieutenant K.C. Trench in “Harry-O.” He starred in the Western television series “The Young Riders,” which also starred his friend Josh Brolin and ran for three years in the early 1990s. He played Councilor Hamann in “The Matrix Reloaded” and “The Matrix Revolution.”

In the 1960s Zerbe was landing his first big movie roles but also remained involved with theatre at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles. There, he was asked to develop a poetry outreach program and Zerbe says he developed his e.e. cummings show while he was on the set of *Cool Hand Luke*. It is not a moment he recalls with clarity: He guesses he read something by cummings and then went out and bought *100 Selected Poems*, a numbered, untitled collection of the poet’s work.

Why cummings? Why not ... another poet? “He’s just so alive and fun, Zerbe said, pausing. “I just had an inkling that it was doable.”

Early on, it was suggested to Zerbe that he team up with another actor, Roscoe Lee Browne, who had been touring his own poetry production or his own. Although, they barely knew each other, the two actors created *Behind The Broken Words*, a production in which they performed poetry and excerpts from plays. They performed what became a highly acclaimed show which went on to Off Broadway and to some 300+ performances across the country. It toured for more than 30 years until Browne died two years ago.

What Zerbe does is not exactly theatre and it is certainly not a poetry reading. It is something the reporter cannot describe because he has never seen it, and the actor could not really describe because ... it’s hard to say. A Shakespearean actor who



has frequently played villainous characters, Zerbe was not about to demystify his approach — how he goes about converting poems with such a distinct structure on the page into theatre.

He does not try to recreate cummings exactly, but if the poem is about a carnival barker hawking his trade, he takes on that character. Wherever it takes you, man, and it takes you a lot of places,” he said. “I just lend myself to it as much as I can. You just get into it. I don’t know.”

Does he have a favorite e.e. cummings poem?

“I don’t have a favorite anything,” he said,”” he said. “Wait a minute, I have a favorite dessert,” and there was laughter in the background.

Zerbe would prefer the audience enter the theater with an open mind, not feeling they have to understand but that they can rediscover the beauty of language, that they can close their eyes and let the images do what they will. “It’s not a digestive evening,” he said. “It is a consumptive evening,”

He could have been cummings

defending “HIM.” “Relax and give the play a chance to strut it’s stuff ... Don’t try to enjoy it, let it try to enjoy you,” cummings once said of the play.

Then it was time for the car to move on. Zerbe sure he would soon lose reception, asked the reporter if he and everything he needed. Then he spoke in a mixture of voices drawn from the wild West.

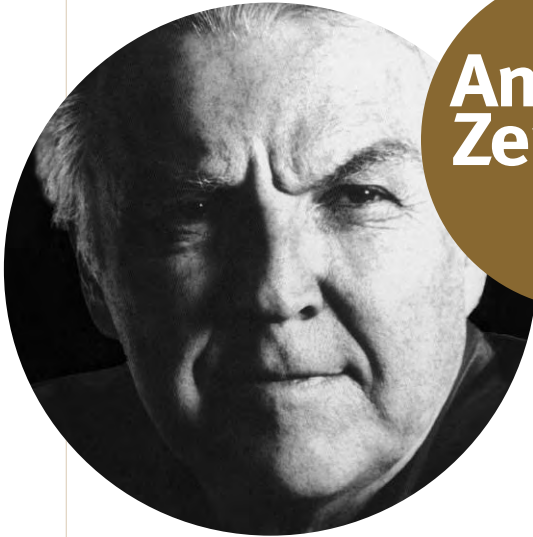
If you go

Anthony Zerbe’s *It’s All Done With Mirrors* will be performed at 8p.m. April 18 at Port Tobacco Players Theater, 508E Charles St., La Plata. Call 301-932-6819

Tickets are \$25, \$15 for students
Go to www.ptplayers.com

Buffalo Bills’ defunct who used to ride a watersmooth-silver stallion and break one two three four five pigeons just like that. Jesus, he wa a handsome man, and what I want to know is, how do you like your blue-eyed boy, Mister Death?

FACE IN THE CROWD



Anthony Zerbe *perfects Everyman role with one-man show*

BY KEN WHITE

Anthony Zerbe is one of those film and stage actors you recognize on sight, but you may not be able to recall his name.

He's embodied every type of character imaginable — the crusty and the suave, the doctors and the killers, the devil and the cop, the convict and the leader — in such films and TV shows as “Cool Hand Luke,” “Star Trek Insurrection” and “The Matrix”.

But there is another side to Zerbe, too, the one who gives voice to poet e.e. cummings in the one man tour-de-force “It's All Done With Mirrors ... an avalanche of e.e. cummings,” which will be in performance at The Reed Whipple Cultural Center.

Zerbe uses characters, accents and wordplay to capture the poet's art in the mix of theatre and salon.

Edward Estlin Cummings was born in Cambridge, Mass., and earned a degree from Harvard. He volunteered for service in World War I as an ambulance driver, and did a stint in a detention camp. After the war he moved to Paris and wrote his first book, “The Enormous Room” which described his experiences in the war. It was published in 1922 and was followed by “Tulips & Chimney's” (1922), “&” (1925), “no thanks:” (1935), “50 Poems” (1940) and “73 Poems” (1963).

Cummings' poetry was marked by an innovative use of typography — words and sentences often were run together and capitalization was often dropped.

He also wrote plays and novels and was a painter.

With subject matter centering around the individuality of humans in an age of consumerism and materialism, Cummings favored spontaneity and intuition over science and intellectualism.

Cummings returned to the United States and died in Conway, N.H. in 1962.

Zerbe's acting career began in the mid-1960s with roles in “Cool Hand Luke,” “Will Penny” and “They Call Me, MISTER Tibbs”.

He also frequently showed up on television. He appeared in five episodes of the original “Mission: Impossible” series and played five different characters.

He won an Emmy for his role as Lt. Trench on the mid-70s show “Harry-O”, starring David Janssen. His next series, “The Young Riders”, in which he played Teaspoon Hunter, the eccentric and gruff manager of a Pony Express station came 13 years later.

He's had roles in “Who'll Stop The Rain”, “The Omega Man”, “Papillon”, “The Dead Zone”, “License to Kill”, “The Touch” and most recently “Star Trek: Insurrection”, “True Crime” and “The Matrix Reloaded” and “Matrix Revolutions”.

On Broadway, he has been seen in “Terra Nova”, “Solomon's Child”, The Little Foxes, His roles include Coriolanus, Iago, Richard III and Macbeth.

His distinctive voice can be heard in audio books such as John Saul's “Darkness”.

'Mirrors' Actor Brings Poetry Off The Page

BY JEFF KORBELIK

Words effortlessly roll off Anthony Zerbe's tongue.

Had I been thinking and not worrying about deadlines and such I would have taped for posterity my phone conversation with this man.

For listening to him speak is a simple pleasure, like hearing birds sing.

He is articulate, eloquent and sometimes very, very funny. Is it any wonder his shows are so captivating.

"Any poem can be elusive," he says to me. "It can be brazen, it can open itself up or close itself down on you. It can turn it's back on you. It can tell you to call it next week or invite you immediately upstairs. Whatever happens, happens."

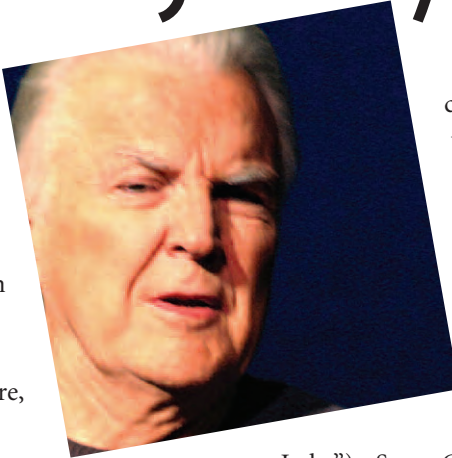
I can't wait. And neither should you.

Zerbe who last appeared at the Leid Center in Lincoln with fellow actor Roscoe Lee Browne in *Behind The Broken Words* last year will now present his show, "It's All Done With Mirrors ... an avalanche of e.e. cummings" at 2 and 7p.m. at the Johnny Carson Theatre.

His appearance is part of a week-long residency at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln which begins with a public lecture at 10:00a.m. at the Carson Theatre.

During "Mirrors," Zerbe moves through a parade of characters, accents and dazzling poetry capturing in perfect moments cummings' favorite subjects such as first love, Paris, the mOOon and the circus.

Like cummings, Zerbe is an accomplished raconteur and his asides and anecdotes recall a time when conversation was



considered an art form. "Mirrors" is a unique mix of theatre and salon.

"That's what I do in a nutshell for which I'm grossly overpaid," he said.

Zerbe is a respected character actor. He's not as well known as some of the leading men he's played opposite from Paul Newman ("Cool Hand

Luke"), Sean Connery ("The Molly McGuires") or Patrick Stewart ("Star Trek: Insurrection").

Instead you'll know him when you see him. His arched eyebrows and rich commanding voice have always been perfect for the villains he's played.

"Theoretically, my job is to enhance the poems," he said. "Some say this deprives the reader of the intimate relationship with a writer. But there's something about poetry and people's sensibilities. Poetry begs to be heard."

During his week long residency, entitled *OFF THE PAGE*, he will work with students in helping them shape their own approach to the presentation of poetry and text. It will not focus on creation or development of character but rather on an approach to the written word and how to inform and enhance presentation. At the end of the week there will be a public performance of the students' selections which Zerbe will direct.

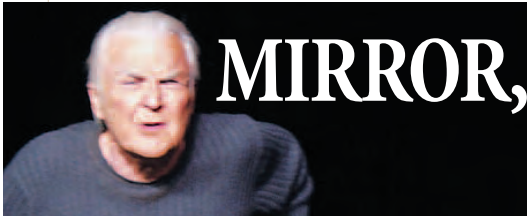
"The idea is to life something 'off the page' ", he says,

All this leads me to ask him if there ever has been a poem he met he didn't like — one that didn't speak to him. Sometimes, he admits, they don't.

"If it doesn't, I don't proceed."

Anthony Zerbe provides “joyous” access to the art and energy beloved poet e.e. cummings.

IT'S ALL DONE WITH MIRRORS



MIRROR, MIRROR

The Crown opens its own black box theater

BY JAMES JOHNSON

Much like the coliseums of old, which could stage a battle for gladiators one evening and a mock sea battle the next, the Crown Center is going out of it sway this year to show off its versatility.

On March 30, the theater will make what organizers are calling their most innovative transformation yet. The Crown will turn its 60,000-sq-ft. expo Center into an intimate, 300 seat, black box theater for its upcoming one man-show *It's All done With Mirrors*, starring film and stage actor Anthony Zerbe.

In the show, Zerbe uses the acting skills he has honed through years of performing to present the work of famous poetry Edward Estlin Cummings (more popularly known as e.e. cummings).

“His writing just appealed to me; it was very ‘actable,’” Zerbe said of Cummings. He first began reading Cummings’ work during long hours between shoots on film sets. “His work lends itself to being spoken. I don’t read poetry, I speak it. If it is spoken from a different point of view, I will act that point of view.”

Zerbe, who studied acting at the Stella Adler Studio in New York had had a long and successful career. He has had starring roles in *The Matrix Revolutions*, *the Matrix Reloaded*, *True Crime*, *Star Trek: Insurrection*, *License to Kill* and *Cool Hand Luke* to name a few.

Zerbe had requested that the show be done in a black box setting as he felt the poetry needed an intimate atmosphere to be appreciated.

I need to be with people, not some tiny distant figure prancing around on stage,” Zerbe said.

All I need is a chair and some lights,” Zerbe said.

A black box theater is typically an unadorned intimate performance space, with minimalist set. They gained popularity in the 1960s and 1970s as they provided a way for artists to perform experimental theatre. Due to the ease of creating one, they were able to make their homes in warehouses, cafes, basements as well as in larger theaters where they became ‘second theaters’.

“This is going to be a very elegant event,” Crown Director of Sales and Marketing Windy Lawson said. “We have some really incredible people in our production department who are able to making amazing things happen every day. What you walk into this black box theatre, you’re not going to know where you are.”

Lawson added that due to the limited space being used for the event, it had originally been intended to be invitation only. That changed after organizers were overwhelmed with requests from people in the area interested in attending.

“This is going to be unique,” Lawson said.

Tickets will be \$42. For more information call 223-2900

Actor Zerbe to honor Cummings' legacy with performance of poetry and prose

BY REGE BEHE

Anthony Zerbe has tackled a variety of high-profile roles during his career as an actor. He's played Cyrano de Bergerac, Iago, Richard III and Macbeth, in addition to featured parts in movies such as "Cool Hand Luke", "The Life an Times of Judge Roy Bean" and "The Molly McGuires".

Among the favorite things he has done, however is, "It's All Done With Mirrors": his performance of the works of e.e.cummings.

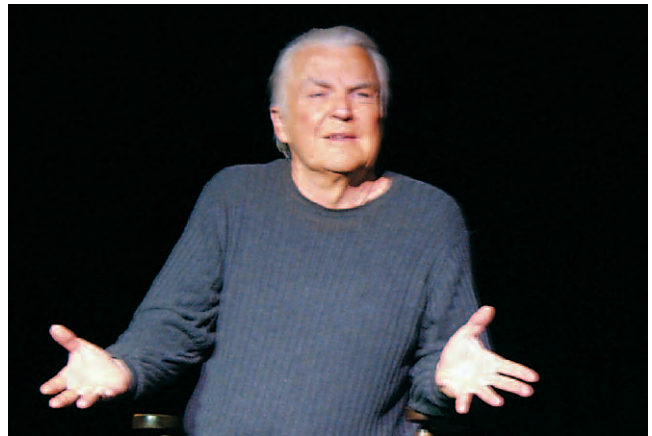
"Cummings loved being an American", Zerbe said during a recent phone interview. He had a great sense of humor and a great sense of character.

Zerbe initially became absorbed in Cummings' poetry when his movie career began to take off. Having more time on his hands on a film set than as a repertory stage actor rehearsing during the day and performing at night; he used extra time to explore the poet's work and life in depth.

"He was probably one of the best-educated, brightest young man of his time," said Zerbe of Cummings. "He studies Greek and Latin and spoke impeccably, his poetry is so loving and his words indicate he knew from whence he came."

Born in 1894 in Cambridge, Mass., Cummings was an ambulance driver during World War I in France but was imprisoned by French authorities on suspicion of disloyalty. After his release, he returned to New York City whereupon he was drafted into the U.S. Army.

After the war, Cummings began to receive recognition for both his poetry and prose. "The Enormous Room" published in 1922 is an acclaimed account of his internment in France.



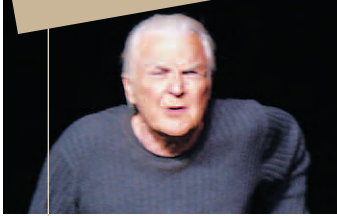
It is Cummings' collections of poetry especially "Tulips and Chimneys", "Him", and "95 Poems" that remain his lasting legacy, however.

The poet did have a somewhat tempestuous personal life — he was married three times within the period of 1924–34 — but Zerbe said this did not affect his work.

"I think he was a fairly stable person and he was brilliant", he said. "He had a great childhood and there wasn't any dark interior or depression. I think he had some dissatisfaction about how he was regarded but who doesn't in culture?"

"It's All Done With Mirrors" is an evening of what Zerbe calls "an avalanche of aliveness". In addition to Cummings poetry, the actor also performs from his letters and lectures.

"It's as natural for an actor to speak the words of a poet as it is to read Shakespeare," said Zerbe. "His work has a certain tone quality. I don't know if Cummings is spiritual and it's not necessarily spiritual for me. But there is something there that is special".



HACC to present poetry performance by star of 'Trek'

BY SHARON JOHNSON

It didn't take long for his "Star Trek: Insurrection" co-stars — those who had been with "Star Trek: The Next Generation" through seven television seasons and three movies — to discover that Anthony Zerbe was not one of the "Star Trek" faithful.

Just before filming started on the movie, the cast of veterans of TV series and newcomers to this big screen production gathered for a reading for a reading of the script.

Zerbe, playing the Federation's villainous Adm. Dougherty, had to refer to the android Star Trek officer in his first speech.

"We cannot locate Commander "DAT-ah", Zerbe read. Fifteen heads turned in unison, the voices of 15 "Star Trek" regulars — including director Jonathan Frakes and star Patrick Stewart — corrected him. "Commander DAY-tah", they chanted.

The "Star Trek" regulars are protective of the series that has given its stars fame and fortune. But despite that minor bloop, Zerbe says the "Star Trek" crew was warm and welcoming even to those who can't tell a "Next Generation" episode from a "Deep Space Nine" adventure. Even to an actor who had never seen a "Star Trek" episode or feature before he was cast in one.

Zerbe's happiest recollection of that film which will be released on home video May 11 is that it is his co-star and on-screen co-conspirator F. Murray Abraham, not he, who had to spend hours in make-up to achieve a distinctive otherworldly appearance.

Movie fans can also spot the veteran character actor on screen in the current Clint Eastwood movie "True Crime".

Indeed, it is Zerbe's movie and television roles that finance Zerbe's lucrative stage career which will bring him to Harrisburg Community College this Friday.

He will perform "*It's All Done With Mirrors an avalanche of the poetry of e.e. cummings*".

Zerbe says he regularly reads poetry during breaks in film. But his introduction to Cummings came when he auditioned for a production of the writer's play "Him" which the Cincinnati Playhouse planned to take to the Spoloeto Festival.

The production fell through but Zerbe had fallen in love with "the pyrotechnics" of Cummings' words.

As a result, the Pomona College dropout who abandoned academic life to study acting has been spending a lot of time on various college campuses.

He tours with this show solo. With fellow actor Roscoe Lee Browne, he performs *Behind The Broken Words*.

Despite their on-and-off relationship, Zerbe insists he never grows tired of Cummings "though he may be growing tired of me."

Perhaps it is the breaks between tours that keeps him so enthusiastic about the show. But then Zerbe is still enthusiastic about acting whether on stage or screen.

Since his movie debut in "Cool Hand Luke", he's appeared in films from "The Molly McGuires," which did much of its filming in northeastern Pennsylvania to David Cronenberg's wonderful film of Stephen King's "The Dead Zone" and the James Bond film "License To Kill".

He's also a veteran of two television series. He won an Emmy as David Janssen's co-star in "Harry-O" in the '70s and has also worked with a younger generation of actors.

Zerbe says he remains in touch with "The Young Riders" co-star Stephen Baldwin and Josh Brolin who worked with him for five seasons at GeVa Theatre in Rochester, NY where he was associate artistic director. (Despite Brolin's warning about the movie's defects, Zerbe says he plans to see Brolin's current film, "The Mod Squad".)

After his current tour, Zerbe plans to take a break for a walking tour of France.

second cummings of a poetic genius

BY MARVIN HIGHTOWER

Gazette Staff

Scene: A Harvard chemistry lab earlier this century.

Action: Poet e.e. cummings '15, 1916, returns to his alma mater to read his verse in public. No one shows up the poet himself ...

That may sound like poetic nonsense run amok onstage. But it happened.

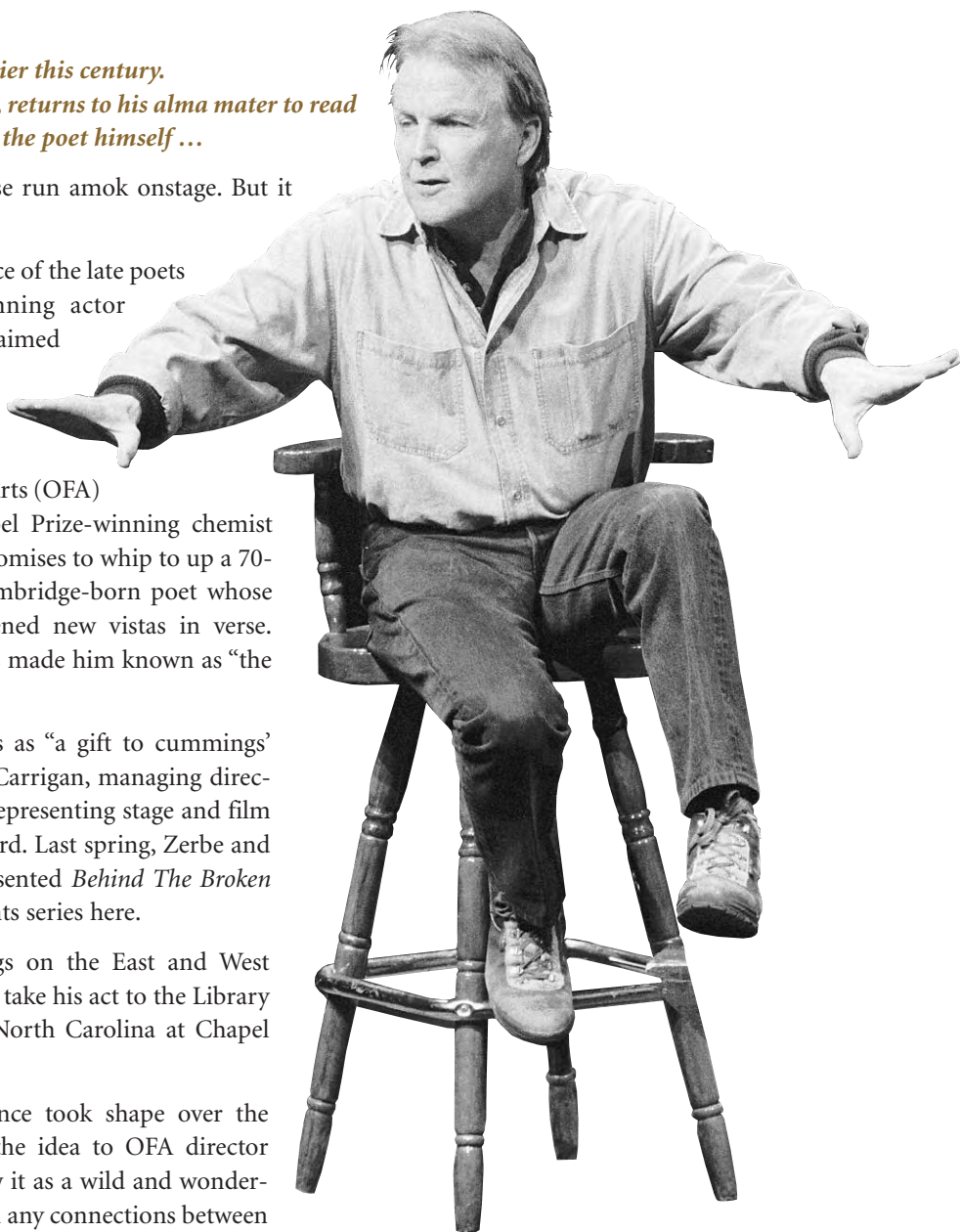
Tomorrow in a unique observance of the late poets 100th birthday, Emmy Award-winning actor Anthony Zerbe will present his acclaimed one-man show *It's All Done With Mirrors* simulated burblings in Science B at 2 p.m.

Sponsored by the Office for the Arts (OFA) in collaboration with Harvard Nobel Prize-winning chemist Dudley Herschbach, Zerbe's event promises to whip to up a 70-minute whirlwind words by the Cambridge-born poet whose imaginative use of topography opened new vistas in verse. Cummings' disdain for capital letters made him known as "the poet of the lower case."

The Harvard appearance comes as "a gift to cummings' memory," according to Ann Patrice Carrigan, managing director of Poetry in Motion, an agency representing stage and film actors in programs of the spoken word. Last spring, Zerbe and fellow actor Roscoe Lee Browne presented *Behind The Broken Words* for the Sanders Theatre Presents series here.

Zerbe has performed cummings on the East and West coasts. For the centennial he will also take his act to the Library of Congress and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Tomorrow's birthday performance took shape over the summer when Carrigan proposed the idea to OFA director Myra Mayman who immediately saw it as a wild and wonderful thing to do. "I'm very interested in any connections between the creative thinking done by artists and scientists, and I just couldn't pass this up," Mayman said last week.



IT'S ALL DONE WITH MIRRORS

The tricky part, she told Carrigan, was finding a chemistry lab — a location probably even less accommodating now than in Cummings' time. Enter Dudley Herschbach, the most sympathetic collaborator Mayman could think of. After all, she reasoned, Herschbach has for the past 14 years held poetry contests in his undergraduate chemistry classes.

Sure enough, the Frank B. Baird Jr. Professor of Science was delighted to supply some “burgling and bubbling” apparatus to simulate Cummings' original setting. During the presentation, Zerbe will explain the poet's surprising choice of locale. Cummings was also a painter, and Zerbe will display a reproduction of a Cummings self-portrait given him by Rochester, NY's Memorial Art Gallery.

Herschbach, who perceives “a natural connection between poetry and science,” sees the event as one more way to help people look at science with fresh eyes. The same goal inspired those poetry assignments in Chem 7 and Chem 10.

“I ask students to reflect on and capture in poetry their observations on some of the big ideas we've talked about,” said Herschbach, who regrets that so many students approach math and science worrying about getting “the right answer.”

“The sad thing is that that's just the opposite of what doing real science is,” he said.

“You're not the least bit worried about ‘getting it right’. Nobody knows what's right when you're working on frontier questions. The great thing about science is that you can get it wrong over and over again because what you're after — call it truth or understanding — waits patiently for you. Ultimately, you'll find the answer because it doesn't change.”

In science as in poetry Herschbach contends, “what really matters is, are you asking an interesting or exciting question, because you're hoping to find some new perspective that will change the way people look at things. That's why we have the poetry contest.”

Zerbe himself seems quite capable of provoking veritable cascades of new insights about one of his favorite poets.