

'Deathtrap' proves worthy of its name

By Mona Z. Koppelman and Jeff Browne

Community theater isn't normally held to the same standards as university or semi-professional productions. But when an audience is left as befuddled as the one at the Lincoln



Community Playhouse's current production of Ira Levin's *Deathtrap*, something is seriously wrong.

Deathtrap opened on Broadway in 1978 and enjoyed a moderately successful run. A subsequent movie starring Michael Caine, Christopher Reeve

and Dyan Cannon also earned more praise than pans. However, Lincoln director Michael D. Mitchell makes a director's biggest mistake: inattention to detail.

Mitchell ignored basic blocking techniques, overlooked obviously weak characterization by the actors, and made no attempt at a realistic set or special effects.

But more than anything else, the audience was left in the dark about important plotlines through much of the first act.

Sidney Bruhl (Phil Heckman) is a washed-out thriller playwright living off his wife Myra's (Anne Smeltzer) money. Clifford Anderson (Paul Pearson) enters the picture — a struggling young playwright with what appears to be a hit play. Myra's death leaves Clifford and Sydney in a fog of suspicion, which only two people can clear

— a Dutch (?) psychic named Helga Ten Dorp (Sidney Johnsen Wayland) and her dignified cohort, Porter Milgrim (Michael Roberts).

But how Helga and Porter figure out the nature of the crime — short of believing in Helga's ESP — is beyond me. The audience is never clued in that Myra had a heart condition, that she is petrified that Sidney might murder Clifford to get the hit play, or that Sidney and Clifford are homosexuals. When the stupefied audience finally realizes that Sidney and Clifford are gay, unease settles over the crowd in a cloud of fidgets and cleared throats.

Myra's death came as a great relief to most of the audience. Her adenoidal bleating grated on the crowd more than it could handle as she sounded more like a cross between a palsied Kate Hepburn and Graham Chapman than a relatively dignified English gen-

tlewoman. Myra never really decided whether she was going to be comic or serious. Her consequently confusing persona and voice do little for the play.

Clifford Anderson never seemed to feel comfortable with his homosexuality. He, too, was confused as to what exactly he was supposed to do. Anderson at times would be the prototypical effeminate gay and at other times, the jockish, silent type. With a little more direction Anderson may have been understandable to the audience. But, as it was, it looked like director Mitchell left Anderson completely to himself to deal with a complex character.

Anderson's best lines often went unheard because Pearson was either unable to understand the humor, or he just felt uncomfortable with his homosexual role.

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WEEKEND

The following is a list of local events, for the coming weekend, beginning tonight.

ART EXHIBITS
Christlieb Collection of Western Art, 205 Love Library-Art by George Caleb Bingham.

Elder Gallery, 50th and Huntington Ave-Ascent '84 — *The Art of the Six Senses* through April 1.

Haymarket Art Gallery, 119 S. Ninth St. — Watercolors by B.J. Stych and glasswork by Carol Rustad and Loren Rice, on display through March 31.

Nebraska State Historical Society, 15th and O streets — *John Faller: A Retrospective Study* on display.

Sheldon Art Gallery, 12th and R streets — Photographs from the permanent collection, photographs by Michael Geiger, craft art by Walter Nottingham and paintings by Ron Slowinski on display through April 1.

University Place Art Center, 4822 Cleveland Ave. — Watercolors by Karen Dienstbier and ceramics by Anita Engberg on display through March 29.

FINE ARTS
Sheldon Art Gallery, 12th and R streets — American String Quartet, Friday, 8 p.m.

LIVE BANDS
Aku Tiki Lounge, 5200 O St. — Allspice tonight through Saturday, \$1 cover charge tonight, \$1.50 Friday and Saturday. No cover charge for guests of the Villager Motor Inn.

Bill's Saloon, 1020 P St. — Bluenotes tonight, \$1 cover charge. Travis Wagner Band Friday and Saturday, \$2 cover charge.

Dinsdale's, 1228 P St. — Luke Stevenson, Friday and Saturday night, no cover charge.

Drumstick, 547 N. 48th St. — Caribe tonight, \$3 cover charge. Digital Sex and Holiday, Friday, \$2 cover charge. Disco Ranch Saturday, \$2 cover charge.

Green Frog, 1010 P St. — Scanner, tonight through Saturday, no cover charge.

Judges, 2630 Cornhusker Highway — High Heel and the Sneakers, tonight through Saturday, \$2 cover charge (includes entertainment at Little Bo's).

Little Bo's, 2630 Cornhusker Highway — Material

Eyes, tonight through Saturday, \$2 cover charge (includes entertainment at Judges).

McGuffey's, 1042 P St. — Lincoln Jazz Society, tonight, no cover charge.

Mountains, 311 S. 11th St. — Blue Notes, Friday and Saturday, \$1 cover charge.

Patoots, 808 P St. — Bad Comedy Night, tonight, no cover charge.

Riveras, 1920 W. O St. — Sweet Potato Band, Friday and Saturday, no cover charge.

Skylight Bistro, 235 N. 11th St. — Jazz with Benson and Link, Friday afternoon, no cover charge. Newton and Sayre Friday night, no cover charge.

Tucker Inn, 3235 S. 13th St. — Free Ride, tonight through Saturday, \$2 cover charge tonight and Friday (includes free bar drink), no cover charge Saturday.

Zoo Bar, 136 N. 14th St. — Table Rockers tonight, \$1.50 cover charge. Charlie Burton and the Cut-Outs Friday and Saturday, \$2 cover charge.

MAJOR EVENTS
Pershing Auditorium, 226 Centennial Mall South-Conway Twitty and Ronnie McDowell, 8 p.m. Friday

MOVIES
(asterisk indicates weekend matinee)

Cinema 1 & 2, 201 N. 13th St. — *Angel*, 1:40, 3:40, 5:40, 7:40 and 9:40 p.m., begins Friday; *Harry and Son*, 7:30 and 9:30 p.m., begins Friday; *Sacred Ground*, 7:15 and 9:15 p.m., ends tonight.

Cooper, 5400 O St. — *Blame It On Rio*, 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30 and 9:30 p.m.

Douglas 3, 1300 P St. — *Against All Odds*, 1:45, 5:05, 7:25 and 9:45 p.m.; *Footloose*, 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15 and 9:15 p.m.; *Never Cry Wolf*, 5:30, 7:30 and 9:30 p.m., ends tonight; *Terms of Endearment*, 5, 7:20 and 9:40 p.m., begins Friday.

East Park 3, 66th and O streets — *Footloose*, 1:10, 3:10, 5:15, 7:20 and 9:25 p.m.; *Lassiter*, 5:40, 7:40 and 9:40 p.m., ends tonight; *Tank*, 1:05, 3:15, 5:25, 7:35 and 9:45 p.m.; *Police Academy*, 1:40, 3:40, 5:40, 7:40 and 9:40 p.m., begins Friday.

Joyo, 6012 Havelock Ave. — *Yentl*, 7:30 p.m., ends tonight.

Plaza 4, 12th and P streets — *Children of the Corn*, 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15 and 9:15 p.m.; *Ice Pirates*, 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9 p.m.; *Police Academy*, 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 p.m., begins Friday. *Splash*, 12:45, 3, 5:15, 7:30 and 9:45 p.m. *Unfaithfully Yours*, 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 p.m. ends tonight.

Sheldon Film Theatre, 12th and R streets — *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, in two parts, Saturday and Sunday 1 p.m.

State, 1415 O St. — *The Dresser*, 7:10 and 9:30 p.m., ends tonight; *Hot Dog, the Movie*, 2:10, 5:40 and 9:25, begins Friday; *Reckless*, 12:30, 4, and 7:40 p.m.

Stuart, 13th and P streets — *Terms of Endearment*, 1:30, 4, and 9:40 p.m., ends tonight; *Racing with the Moon*, 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30 and 9:30 p.m., begins Friday (special showing tonight at 7:30).

UPC Film Series — *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, 7 and 9:15 p.m. tonight in the Rostrum of the Nebraska Union.

THEATER
Lincoln Community Playhouse, 2500 S. 56th St. — *Deathtrap*, 8 p.m. Thursday through Saturday.

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