

entertainment

UNL theater professor Baldwin also award winning playwright

Joseph Baldwin is a prolific and award-winning playwright. Two of his recent plays, *A Deed from the King of Spain* and *Snow for the Lovers*, have received recent recognition.

Baldwin is professor of theater arts at UNL, instructing introduction to the theater as well as playwriting. The playwriting class is almost a hobby, he says, since there are so few enrolled in it. "But playwriting is my main interest," he added. And the number of plays he has written proves it. "I always have one or two plays on the fire," he said. "I am pleased this University recognizes the value of creative work as research."

Baldwin has taught here since 1958. Prior to his move here, Baldwin was associate director of theater at the University of Mississippi. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees in English with minors in drama and journalism from the University of Texas, and earned his Ph.D from the State University of Iowa.

Snow for the Lovers recently won first place in a national playwriting competition. Snow is a "sentimental farce," a nostalgic 3-act comedy about college life in the '40s.

The contest was conducted in order to discover better scripts for high school production. Production dates for the play, which will premiere at Case High School in Racine, Wis., are May 9, 10 and 11. It will be performed in the new "thrust stage" theatre at Case High School.

The thrust stage is becoming increasingly popular, according to Baldwin, who describes it as a thrust which runs out into the audience, so that the audience is sitting on three sides of the stage, rather than just one.

Baldwin is currently working on "a couple of plays," but declined to give information about them saying they were still in the planning stages.



Prof. Joseph Baldwin

diane wanek out of my head

Baldwin has won many awards including the Theodore Marburg Playwriting Award from Johns Hopkins University, the Texas Playwrights' Award and the Festival of Arts Playwriting Award.

His *Deed from the King of Spain* has been lauded by Howard Thompson in the New York Times: "Baldwin's fine drama of a disintegrating family in the American Southwest simmers like a Chekovian chamber work, then boils into a darkly sardonic symphony."

A Deed is currently included in the repertory of the American Center for Stanislavski Theatre Art, playing in the Greenwich Mews Theatre in New York City. This group has also chosen the play as their offering in the Festival of Off-Broadway this May. "I feel pretty good that my play was chosen, since there were other choices, such as a Chekov and an O'Neill," Baldwin said.

Rosencrantz, Guildenstern reach exceptional rapport

Review by Dennis Ellermeier

The University Theatre production of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is both profound and funny. Director William Morgan has taken a choice script and approached the limits of really excellent theater.

A take-off of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Tom Stoppard's play probes the anonymous characters of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, revealing a lot about the predicament of modern man.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern pass through the three acts in abysmal confusion. The events at Elsinore, the Danish King's castle, are without lucidity for them. What they are able to conclude does not nearly coincide with the audience perception.

Asking questions about the nature of life and death, they reach no real resolution and are finally extinguished with a tragic casualness. Guildenstern: "Now you see me now you..."

Stoppard's humor is dreary; a guffaw of ridiculousness that often chameleons into precise and searing comment.

He has left Rosencrantz and Guildenstern struggling for, but never achieving, vision or understanding. The Howell actors, however, brim with understanding of their roles.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, played by George Hansen and Doug Brissey, are excellent. They are an inseparable pair in the script, and it is hard to think of one without the other. Like Tweedledee and Tweedledum, their characters reflect and magnify each other. Even their

physical appearance stresses their sameness.

Near the end of Act I, they play a word game in the manner of tennis. Questions are volleyed back and forth with rules limiting the possibilities. Their performance here is characteristic of the entire show; timing is precise and their rapport is exceptional.

While competent as a pair, they also displayed moments of individual power in their last separate speeches.

With the play built on such sturdy foundations, everything else comes off convincingly.

Donovan Diez, as the Player, and his troupe of actors present two edged humor throughout. They are hilarious at times but also serve biting comment on the action. The troupe was bawdy, zealous, and well played.

The other characters, to varying degrees, complement the leads. Among the stronger are Cindy Wallis as Ophelia and Melissa Critchfield as Gertrude.

Technically the show was well served with rich Elizabethan costumes designed by Joy Mrkvicka and the customary fine lighting designs of Jerry Lewis.

On the whole the show is first rate. One caution, however. The humor and comment can be rather cerebral at times, so stay alert. For extra enjoyment you might brush up on the Bard's *Hamlet* before you go.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead will run through May 4. Curtain is at 8 p.m. Admission: regular \$2.50, students \$2.

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PLAZA 2

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