

'Beastly' play opens with a whine

By Charlie Krig

The "beast" presently residing in the UNI Studio Theater opened Tuesday night not with a roar but with a whine. The play, *Nourish the Beast* by Steve Tesich, was not well-constructed but this production, which runs through Sunday, capitalizes on the best of the haphazard script.

theater review

Tesich's plan must have been to pepper the script with numerous character types and then hope some sort of conflict would develop. What happens is little more than a string of one-liners and insults about racism, politics, sex, relatives, vomiting and other fun subjects. The script suffers from the uncohesive form.

The actors suffer, too. For each meaty, truthful line there is another that is strained beyond humor or believability. The resulting performances seesaw between raucous hilarity and bland banality.

Loreda Shuster as Goya, the woman who adopted all the crazies in the script, was so nervous her performance vacillated with the script. Either her jokes were bright and funny or they failed because they were played for the laughs and not as part of the character. Most of the others - V. Eric Sorensen as Mario, Joe McNeely as Bruno, Ann Sandin as Sylvia, Woody Skokan as Adolf, James M. Mellgren as Studly and Dan Reinehr as the Client - also had their highpoints and disasters.

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The two remaining actors, however, were consistently real and funny. Douglas Street's portrayal of the Old Man was uniformly absurd without degenerating into stereotypical acting. John Thew was even better. In fact, his characterization of the Criminal was no less than superb as he made "hey" (the word that comprised the majority of his vocabulary) while the lights shined on him.

But you would be gullible to believe that this play makes a strong social comment about the 1970s. The subject matter is presented more like a series of comic skits rather than as a coherent play with a goal. It comes off remarkably like a Johnny Carson monologue: encompassing the sublime and the appalling without a chance of permanence or survival beyond immediate humor.

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