

## Silly spoof capitalizes on characters idiosyncrasies

By Charlie Krig

"A sketch."

Henry Carr said all in that phrase. *Travesties*, the Tom Stoppard play that opened Friday night in UNL's Howell Theater, is a fast-faced series of imaginations from an old man's senile mind. Henry Carr (played by Douglas Anderson) is the lunatic reigning over all the activities.

At the start of the play Carr is sitting in his living room, playing the piano and reminiscing about an incident that occurred 50 years ago; his acclaimed performance in a James Joyce production of

tained interest in what could have been drawn out, boring stories.

James Ryan, as Joyce, was erratic. His power and accent fluctuated which detracted from his character. Tristan Tzara, as played by Jack Honor, was an eccentric neurotic whose bizarre art ideas comprised much of the humor. George Loudon's interpretation of Lenin was powerful, especially his long speech delivered as if at a political rally.

The rest of the cast, Steve Brown as Bennett the butler, Deb Miller as Gwendolen, Judith Radcliff as Cecily and Melissa Baer, skillfully highlighted the absurdity in each scene.

Absurd is the best word for Stoppard's concoction of relationships among the cast of crazies. The scenes are performed as Carr remembers them and when the sketch gets too grotesque he suddenly returns to the beginning and tells it again, except that each regression takes the characters into different situations.

Suddenly, someone who wasn't in the action the tome before will enter or the character will start singing their lines or calm, platonic dialogue will turn to lust or hatred or the lines will be in limericks.

Stoppard appears to have thrown together a silly spoof with no meaning, but the opposite is true. His choice of words is so exact that concentration is necessary to catch each pun, parody and trick. Stoppard bravely steals scenes from *The Importance of Being Earnest* and twists them to include Lenin's speeches, Joyce's foolish poetry and Tzara's nonsensical art forms. The resulting humor follows no reason and capitalizes on the idiosyncrasies of each character's extremist views.

Carr admits the confusion his memory creates: "I'm finding his conversation very hard to follow. It's like hearing every other line of the Catechism," he tells Tzara. But the Dada in Tzara offers the clearest understanding of their weird situations. "Without art, man was a coffee-mill," he tells the group. "But with art, man is a coffee-mill!"

### theater review

Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*. The play was the apex of his non-descript career as a minor consulate official in Zurich. But the event was not completely happy.

Carr sued Joyce for the cost of the costume Carr wore in the play; Joyce counter-sued for some tickets Carr didn't return.

Stoppard takes those facts from a real conflict between the two men and explodes them into a frivolous, silly comedy that features the petty fight and complicates matters by exploiting some could-be meetings with two other mainacs in Zurich at that time: Lenin, leader of the Russian revolution, and Tristan Tzara, father of the Dadaist art movement.

Anderson is nothing short of superb. His transitions from the crazy old Carr to the young consulate buffoon are remarkable because he achieves the change through voice and gesture without help from makeup. He also performed his long monologues fluidly with energy that main-



Photo by Bob Pearson

George Loudon is Lenin in Tom Stoppard's "Travesties".

It just depends on what and who you define as "normal."

The play will run Tuesday through Saturday with performances at 8 p.m.

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A play dealing with an unusual type of nostalgia will be presented tonight at 7:30 in the Laboratory Theater (room 204) of Temple Building. Its title is *Two Lips Plus A Banana—A Nostalgic Revue of "Relevant" Theater from the Sixties*.

The director, Harley Lofton, a graduate student in the UNL theater department, described the play as a "plastic, surrealistic, neo-classic, pseudo-musical" that features 10 performers in changing roles. The individual scenes include music from Megan Terry rock musicals, Bob Dylan songs and even a poem, *Returning North of the Vortex* by Allen Ginsburg.

Lofton said the scenes, when seen separately, don't appear to fit together but they form a contextual meaning when presented in sequence.

Cast members are Jim Anderson, Blake Hambrick, Kirby Henderson, Patti Knight, Cathy Lang, Michele Miller, Kathy Saylor, Jeff Schultz, Woody Skokan, Sarah Stinson and D.J. Wetterer. Charles Gould will recite a poem and Brent Learned will play the piano.

Costume design is by Lisa Jantz, light design is by Bob Olson and set design is by Harley Lofton. Shelley Suellwold is assistant director.

There is no admission charge for the performance, a very reasonable price for this unique theatrical presentation.

## Cornstock music enjoyable, but missing festival mood

By Casey McCabe

As a free concert, it was an enjoyable show by capable bands. As a festival, Cornstock failed in the necessary elements.

The first indication of this was that people were leaving the Sports Complex about as fast as they were coming in. The disappointment after the festival had been moved indoors for the first time in eight years, was heightened by the fact that the weather for the afternoon was quite pleasant after all.

### music review

And UNL students who dropped in any time after 2 p.m. would have found the only available seats were facing the back of the group. This was due to the stage arrangement, which allowed good visibility to less than half the Sports Complex, and did not permit the crowd on the floor.

With Lincoln Public Schools recessed for the day, students faced stiff competition for available seating. Those who did not like the non-festival atmosphere of the show soon left to pursue their own creative interests for the afternoon.

What is a festival atmosphere? It is where the crowd can move about, interact, dance if desired, and get a little crazy. These elements which were apparent in past outdoor Cornstocks, were understandably missing in the confines of the Sports Complex.

This is not to put the blame on the show's organizers. Quick decisions had to be made that would allow for the least possible hassles, and the logical ones were carried through. A wet concert, or no concert at all were possible alternatives.

The crowd was surprisingly cooperative once settled in, and those who stayed were treated to the sounds of the afternoon's three bands; Morningstar, Timberline, and The Ozark Mountain Daredevils.

Morningstar was the show's "rock" attraction. According to the group's manager, Morningstar doesn't like labels, and puts more variety into their style. Still, the band came off sounding rather typical, and very much like the many bands that try to capitalize on the Boston, Foreigner, Head East sound. It was clean music though, and had its appeal to a good portion of the audience.

Timberline was soon to catch the flow of the crowd with the country flavor in their music, that brought some foot stomp-in' and hand clappin' participation. Jim Salestrom's banjo picking and the sometimes overlooked original country material of Timberline made the band's set especially enjoyable. When they went into their rock material, they didn't really sacrifice anything musically but Timberline seemed more at home in the country vein, and the crowd was more receptive to it as well.

The same was true with the Ozark Mountain Daredevils who got the place hopping to the hillbilly sounds of "Chicken Train" and "If You Want To Get To Heaven", but slowed down considerably with some of their newer, more structured

material. But the band's professionalism showed through and by the time they left the stage, the crowd was on its feet cheering for more.

One problem that hampered all groups was that the volume levels seem to have been set for an outdoor show, and indoors it was cause for a distortion in the sound.

The Daredevils mentioned their disappointment at not being able to play outdoors, a sentiment shared by many there and even more who didn't bother to stay around. But with outdoor festivals you have to take certain risks, and this year they just didn't pan out. The only one to blame is the weatherman.



Photo by Ted Kirk

Steve Cash of The Ozark Mountain Daredevils.