

Arts & Entertainment

'Talley's Folly' creates appreciation for UNL theater

By Mike Frost

Too often, I think we kid ourselves into thinking we have professional caliber theater here in Lincoln. Especially after seeing productions like "Later" or "The Skin of Our Teeth," which are so well-staged, the tendency is to believe this is as good as it comes. The Guthrie Theater's two-day stand at UNL's Kimball Hall definitely proves that, yes, the university's productions may be good — but they're certainly not the best there is.

The Guthrie may very well be the best there is. There's no reason to expect any UNL production to be as professional as

experience one that cannot be equaled by any other form of artistic expression. "Talley's Folly" is a perfect example of this kind of experience. Theater in Lincoln may never seem the same again.

What makes the Guthrie so special are the actors. In the case of Langford Wilson's "Talley's Folly," there are only two thespians — Eugene Troobnick, who plays Matt Friedman, and Jacqueline Knapp who portrays Sally Talley.

The play itself, which takes place during World War II, is a simple one. Friedman is a European immigrant, who also happens to be Jewish. Through some incredible turn of events we are not made privy to, he has fallen in love with Sally Talley, a delightful Missouri farm girl, who, despite her feelings for Matt, finds herself torn between her Semitic lover and the demands made by her geo- and egocentric family. The action takes place entirely in a folly (a gazebo-like structure) built by one of Sally's eccentric relatives; hence the name "Talley's Folly."

Their dialogue brilliantly exposes their insecurities, strengths and handicaps. Matt is a witty accountant with a tragic past, Sally an expatriated Sunday School teacher who should have left home a long time ago. Their characters blend and clash and blend again in such a way that, by the play's



Jacqueline Knapp is Sally Talley and Eugene Troobnick is Matt Friedman in the Guthrie Theater's production of "Talley's Folly."

end, we feel a sort of catharsis — as if we ourselves had lived through this traumatic experience. In a way, then, trauma supplants drama.

The play is amusingly written. In fact, the play's first five minutes or so are nothing more than a humorous monologue, delivered by Troobnick/Friedman (the distinction became blurry at points). One of the presentation's cleverest moments is expose on the life expectancy of a bee ("Who knows what a bee expects?" Troobnick chortles). Shortly after this, the play's action subtly begins.

Unfortunately, the dialogue too often is trite and repetitious. However, this shortcoming is so overshadowed by the actors' performances, that it ultimately becomes irrelevant. There is so much emotion that you almost believe what you are hearing — no matter how contrived it might sound (and it did sound quite contrived toward the end).

Knapp is delightful as Sally Talley, combining just the right amounts of savvy and innocence to make the characterization credible. Troobnick's Matt (according to the program, the actor has been playing this role for quite some time) sometimes seems a bit much; however, it still is an

effective portrayal. What is most chilling is Matt's disintegration from a self-assured businessman to a scared Jewish refugee. This transition is the play's main strength.

The production is 107 minutes long (Troobnick makes this quite clear in his monologue), with no intermission. However, despite the lack of a break, the time passed quickly, and, after a few customary bows, the actors are quickly gone, the experience is over.

Or perhaps the experience has just begun. Presentations like "Talley's Folly" tend to reaffirm one's faith in live theater. These apprentices in theater workshops may not be as accomplished as Jacqueline Knapp and Eugene Troobnick, but wouldn't it be nice to be able to say "I saw so-and-so when they were in a college presentation of 'She Stoops to Conquer?'"

Yes, theater is alive in Lincoln, Nebraska. And although a troupe as versatile as the Guthrie Theater may not return to the Capital City for some time, it is still important to attend as many productions as possible. Hopefully, the Guthrie's appearance will spur on interest in live theater here.

This, then, would be the greatest achievement of "Talley's Folly."

Theater Review

"Talley's Folly." UNL's presentations are student ventures; our peers graciously letting us in on their learning processes. There is a certain magic in that, to be sure.

However, there is nothing quite like professionally-produced theater. There's a certain excitement, an indescribable polish, a special glitter that makes the theater

Dinsdale's offers food, bar

By Chris Welsch

In a classic "Monty Python's Flying Circus" episode, Doug and Dinsdale Pyranha cavorted with a giant hedgehog. Dinsdale believed the hedgehog was out to get him. In his paranoid frenzy, he nailed several people's heads to tables.

Little did he know that some years later, in the quiet burg of Lincoln, his name would reappear on the front of a restaurant at 1228 P St.

Dinner Review

Jon Hedges, owner of Dinsdale's, said the name came to him and his partner during a brainstorming session.

The restaurant reflects none of the whimsical characteristics of its namesake. Hedges opened the restaurant Feb. 17 and began serving food Feb. 28.

Dinsdale's occupies the space which housed Brannigan's and later the Trader. Very few renovations have been made in the decor. A few antique musical instruments lining the walls are the most substantial change.

Dinsdale's serves lunch, but operates as a lounge at night. The fare includes several hamburger variations, three soups, six sandwich selections and a variety of appetizers.

The hamburgers at Dinsdale's are delicious. I wanted to avoid using that word. I couldn't. For \$2.50, you can get one of these char-broiled delicacies, along with a big pile of steak fries. The fries are at least as good as the hamburgers on a relative potato scale.

The salad bar at Dinsdale's is sufficient. It has all the necessary trappings without any of the frills.

Another highlight on the menu is the beer-cheese soup. A large cup costs \$1 and is well worth the price. The soup has a tangy, sharp cheese taste, with just a hint of beer and onions adding to the overall effect. Hedges said the beer-cheese soup has established itself as a customer favorite.

The polite service and quiet atmosphere are also pluses at Dinsdale's — but now for the minus.

I ordered the "Divinity" with the beer-cheese soup. It was not heavenly.

What purported to be sliced turkey with hollandaise sauce and fresh sliced tomatoes later turned out to be mediocre turkey roll on a piece of mushy white bread. The tomatoes were fresh and tasty and so were the mushrooms, but the hollandaise sauce was almost nonexistent. I didn't like it. Avoid the "Divinity."

Dinsdale's offers one half-price drink to patrons with a ticket stub from evening movies. Hedges said many movie-goers are taking him up on the offer.



Owner Jon Hedges serves up the brew at Dinsdale's.

Is the GQ search sincere? And what's in it for Gumshoe?

The G. Cue: Late night DJ Mustafena Miztaykh took me to the KZEN studio. He had no choice. I was handcuffed to his ankle. Miztaykh sent out an A.P.B. to the lonely phantoms who have made a rhythm-and-blues mantra of his play list. The GQ Guy was among the devotees and he called in to say that he would meet me, alone, at the Drumstick.



Pat Clark

I carried Miztaykh up to my office. Babs was out front at her desk, belching The Clash into a nearly empty bottle of Mad Dog 20-20.

"Babs, get on the horn and find me a locksmith."

"It's always tease, tease, tease," she wailed, sneering at me. She's better with blues numbers, I thought.

"Babs," I said, waving my free hand in front of her face in an effort to make the words register. "Babs . . . the handcuffs . . . I need a locksmith," I said, mouthing "locksmith" broadly, like a vaudeville comedy routine.

" . . . you're happy when I'm on my knees," she belted, a cackle of laughter starting to form in her voice. She pointed

at the handcuffs, then at Miztaykh, back and forth, and you could hear the har-har chorus grow.

"Locksmith . . . Babs . . ."

She was pounding the desk with the palm of her hand, screaming white noise full of laughter. I looked back at Miztaykh draped over my shoulder. He had fallen asleep reading a Sanskrit murder mystery paperback. I decided the locksmith could wait.

I went into the office, banking Miztaykh's head off the door as we negotiated the turn. There was a crowd waiting for me inside: Mona Vermiami, Diane Pemberton and the dame who kicked me around the Showcase whose name I would have to get sometime. It was the kind of a crowd you'd expect to meet at high noon with pistols in a town with a name like Tumbleweed Gulch, a bare-fanged crowd of vampires who looked as if they thought I was the blood bank.

I casually wheeled around and sat at my desk, splashing Miztaykh's head against the wall as I did so. "Anybody want a drink?" I said with bogus warmth.

"No, but you do," Mona said. "A double Wild Turkey with a twist of Fate." I forced out a phony laugh, and as I did so Miztaykh dropped from my shoulder and tumbled face first to the floor.

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