

Arts & Entertainment

Wilde's 'trivial' play a serious comedy

By Mary Louise Knapp

One of Oscar Wilde's wittiest and best-known plays, "The Importance of Being Earnest," played to a full house Monday evening at Kimball Recital Hall. The play was performed by the Missouri Repertory Theatre from the University of Missouri, Kansas City, and directed by Francis J. Cullinan.

Wilde's play, subtitled "A Trivial Comedy for Serious People," expresses his belief that "We should treat all the trivial things of life very seriously, and all the serious things of life with sincere and studied triviality." That is exactly what his characters do. They are quite serious about boutonnières and tea-cake, but casual about business appointments and marriage.

They also lie casually, which gets two of the principal characters, John Worthing (played by Charles Leader) and Algernon Moncrieff (played by Jeffrey Guyton) into some very amusing trouble.

"The Importance of Being Earnest" revolves around Algernon, John and their sweethearts, Gwendolen Fairfax (played by Mary Adams-Smith) and Cecily Cardew (played by Melinda McCrary.) Gwendolen and Cecily have vowed to only marry men named Earnest, which is what they believe their beaux are called.

The uncovering of this deception provides Wilde with the opportunity to make many pointed comments about all aspects of society and the audience with the opportunity to appreciate a bit of purely frivolous comedy.

Wilde said of "The Importance of Being Earnest" that it was "written by a



Photo courtesy Kimball Hall

Cecily (Melinda McCrary) and Gwendolen (Mary Adams-Smith) have an "earnest" conversation in Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest."

butterfly for butterflies." While enjoyable, Monday's night performance lacked the "butterfly" quality that is indispensable to a play of this nature.

The play is almost entirely composed of brief, witty phrases which, if not carefully spoken, tend to sound heavy-handed. In the mouths of some of the actors, Wilde's witticisms sounded more pontifical than sparking.

Guyton, as Algernon, was amusing and likable but not at all the languid, aesthetic young man Wilde portrayed in the play. He was far too excitable and boyish to play the role convinc-

ingly, although he was lavishly surrounded with all its trappings, including a sheer pink and mauve bathrobe.

Leader, as the more serious John, gave a fine performance. His use of facial expressions, especially when exasperated with Algernon, was delightful.

The scenes between Adams-Smith as Gwendolen and McCrary as Cecily were some of the funniest and well-performed moments in the play. McCrary played the ingenuous Cecily well, but was not as girlish as she might have been. Adams-Smith's Gwendolen

appeared too much older than Cecily to be a realistic rival, although her performance was one of the best.

Peg Small, as the imperious Lady Bracknell, was nearly perfect in her portrayal of an English society woman of the day. Overdressed and overbearing, she was a wonderful representation of the aristocratic mother trying to find her daughter (Gwendolen) a suitable husband.

Miss Prism, Cecily's governess, played by Lynna Jackson, and Dr. Canon Chasuble, D.D., played by Tom Small, carried on "intellectual" and flirtatious conversations as a sideline to the main plot.

Small, as the other-worldly Chasuble, was very good, but Jackson acted too much like a young girl for her character.

The costumes and scenery were excellent and fit the period well.

Wilde would have liked Algernon's flat, which was decorated according to the "aesthetic" fads of the time, with Japanese designs and a wall mural of painted storks. Even the proper English butler, Lane, tried occasionally to act like an Oriental servant. One can imagine Algernon patiently training him to do that.

In contrast to Algernon's unorthodox interior decoration, the drawing-room and garden of John's Manor House were the models of Victorian respectability, complete with a rose trellis and potted palms.

Music from Gilbert and Sullivan's "Patience", which satirizes the "aesthetic" culture of the day, was played during the intermission, which heightened the comic effect.

Houserockers: Everything but an MTV video



The Houserockers
Cracking Under Pressure
MCA

The Houserockers have almost everything it takes to succeed in rock 'n' roll.

They have an album full of trite rock clichés like "I've got a girl with a rock 'n' roll heart" and "Don't it hurt when he treat you like a lovin' cup?"

They have competent, unoriginal instrumental hacks, who can imitate the best guitar riff or bass line and a lead vocalist who can stretch his range from an Elvis Costello croon to a David Lee Roth roar.

These guys even have a blatantly sexist album cover!

All they lack is a video on MTV.

Maybe they have a video. MTV might even pick it up someday. The Houserockers' sound and look certainly fits in with the general inns of black-leather genre rock videos.

The photo on the back of *Cracking Under Pressure* depicts five slightly out-of-focus toughs in black leather against an industrial area background.

Although their music is not strictly heavy metal, the group looks like Krokus or Judas Priest or Quiet Riot or AC/DC. But they're uglier. Why else would they be out of focus?

Therein lies the Houserockers' critical flaw; they aren't photogenic.

Continued on Page 13

Wealth of art graces local galleries

By Billy Shaffer

Gallery directors are staying very busy around Lincoln this fall. This week alone, Sheldon is wrapping up two exhibitions and opened three shows Tuesday, the Haymarket Gallery opened a show Sunday, the new Nebraska State Historical Society Museum will open on Saturday and the eighth Annual Lincolnfest celebration begins Fri-



Billy Shaffer

day night. Put on your art boots this weekend and go lookin'.

Gloria Graham is displaying ceramic and mixed media pieces at Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery through Sunday. This 43-year-old Albuquerque, N.M. artist's sculptures are reminiscent of African art and Brancusi (himself African-influenced), and even has a slight American Indian flavor. The pieces' eerily beautiful shades come from the carbon in the seaweed she wrapped her work in before firing it.

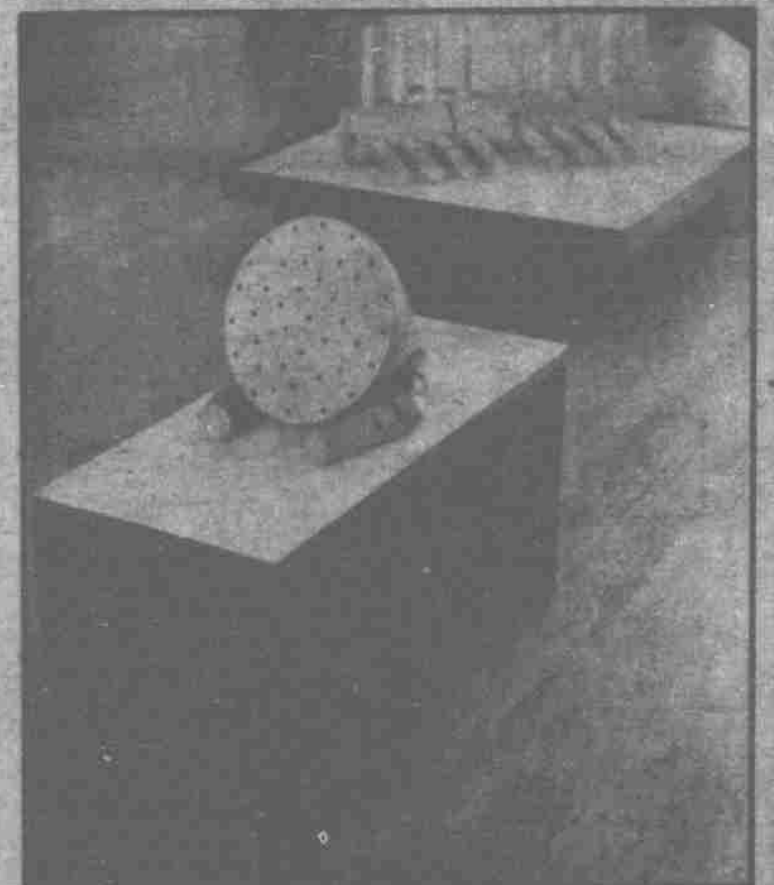
Also at the Sheldon Gallery through Sunday are Victor Schragar's large color Polaroids, and the show titled "The Right Stuff: Recent Acquisitions," a tribute to Sheldon's recently retired curator, Norman Geake.

The depth of Sheldon's permanent collection is on display in its second floor south galleries. Each of the six rooms shows either cubism, interiors, landscapes, the human figure, abstract expressionism or color-field painting.

It's a great opportunity for a gallery-goer to get a quick overview of these movements and genres, and see some genuine masters of American painting. The show will last until at least Oct. 21, and possibly to Nov. 1.

The three shows that opened Oct. 4 include a UNL art faculty show, selected by Sheldon's new director, George Neubert, self-portrait prints by Gordon Holler and a "History of Photography" exhibit taken from the Sheldon's collection, curated by Anthony Montoya (see below).

Photographer Anthony Montoya is currently displaying his prints at the governor's mansion.



Staff photo by Don Kufins

Ceramic by Gloria Graham, now on display at Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery.

The mansion is open to the public on Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The spanking new Nebraska State Historical Society Museum, 131 Centennial Mall North, opens this Saturday afternoon. Stay tuned for a future review.

Everything's just ducky at the Haymarket Gallery, 111 S. Ninth St., where 10 woodcarvers are showing off their expertise at hacking chunks of wood down to super-realistic waterfowl. These ain't no decoys, however, at prices up to \$1,800. The birds are painstakingly painted, especially the feathers, making it difficult to observe the "Please don't touch the animals" placards. The Haymarket is open Tuesday through Sunday.

If all this isn't enough for you, don't forget the annual Lincolnfest celebration this weekend, featuring arts, crafts, a food fair, bike races and lots of live entertainment. Watch Friday's Daily Nebraskan for a complete schedule of events.