

# 'The Hostage': 'What it is, is fun'

By Chris Burbach  
Daily Nebraskan Senior Editor

Call it first night jitters. "The Hostage" cast took an act to break

## Theater Review

into Brendan Behan's brash bawdy battleground of a play, but once there they took no prisoners. The players began slowly Thursday, stumbling over lines and just missing their timing on a madcap script that demands snap. But when the hostage himself, Leslie (Scott Dienstbier) burst onto the

scene and into song, the production began its climb to a hilarious high.

The I.R.A. takes Leslie hostage in an effort to prevent the execution of an Irish lad held prisoner in Belfast. The Briton is jailed in the play's only set, a madhouse of ill repute in Dublin.

The Irish Republican battle against the British Empire is ostensibly the story of "The Hostage," but the play jeers at everything from patriotism to religion to homosexuality through speech, song and prance. The play's author may well have had some serious point to make with this lunacy, but his crazy character's cavortings wrestle levity from the grasp of any ghost of gravity which

threatens to invade the whorehouse.

The whorehouse is really more of an inbreeding lunatic asylum than a brothel — flitting between beds, brew and bagpipe are a schizophrenic "sociable worker," a kilt-clad Briton-turned-Gael civil war veteran, a sexual bear of a Soviet sailor, a bisexual in a bowler, I.R.A. teetotalers, a gimpy Guinness-guzzling yarn-spinning innkeeper and his warbling sharp-tongued wife and an attending cast of ladies whose livelihood is not waiting.

In one scene, the whole lot trots out their love for their respective fatherlands. Miss Gilchrist (the sociable worker) takes time out from "saving the

soul" of Mr. Mulleady to flap the Union Jack from atop a table and scream "Rule Britannia" while about her the Irish folk rave of dear old Ireland and the Russian sailor trots out the hammer and sickle.

Dead center in all this craziness are Leslie and his new found love, the red haired saint Teresa. The two are a bit above the others' delirium, but are certainly not immune to it. Leslie, in a moment of rage, puffs his chest and vows that a Briton can die just as well as an Irishman, and Teresa refuses to become an informer, even though it means refusing to save her lover from the grave.

The brothel's gay trio does not disdain such an undertaking, however. After a combination battle dance and romp in praise to their gender (during which they solicit applause from all in the audience who "believe in fairies"), the trio executes a daring rescue attempt to save poor Leslie from the evil I.R.A. teetotalers after his hide.

Dienstbier is the only player to hit his stride right away and keep on it. From his first appearance to his disappearance, the young actor flashes smiles, sings ditties and expounds with such ease that he seems to loosen up the entire cast.

Susan Conover glows as the crackling cackling Miss Gilchrist, saver of souls. Conover's ebullience makes her a scene stealer, whether she be intoning a hair brained dirge or belting out a hymn of bawd.

Cynthia Munger plays Teresa, who is tame and soft spoken compared to the rest of the lot. Munger plays well opposite Leslie and the others; in fact, she develops quite a character of own while meshing and contrasting with her fellow players.

To call "The Hostage" satirical, irreverent, blasphemous or bawdy falls short even of understatement. The UNL Theatre production damn near does the play justice — had it not been for first night jitters, one might say the play damn near does the production justice. And the butterflies should be gone by tonight.

To quote Leslie, "The bells of hell go ting-a-ling-a-ling/For you but not for me/Oh death where is thy sting-a-ling-a-ling/Oh grave thy victory?"

What it is, is fun.

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"The Hostage" will be staged at Howell Theatre at 8 p.m. tonight and Saturday, and again Monday through Nov. 3. Admission is \$5 and \$4 on weeknights and \$5.50 and \$4.50 on weekends.

## UNL Highrollers shuffle cards for Run, league play and charity

Whether your game is pitch or five-card stud, a card club is on deck at UNL.

The Highrollers Card Club is for anyone interested in playing cards and having fun, say the two men who started the club.

Brent Weissert and Craig Gissler, both UNL students, said they got the idea to start a card club last summer and shuffled it into action this fall.

Weekly meetings and a monthly business meeting will be held, but

Weissert and Gissler said they plan to keep the club as loosely structured as possible.

The club is open to anyone who enjoys fast-dealing card games, Gissler said. Students, professors, administration and staff are encouraged to join.

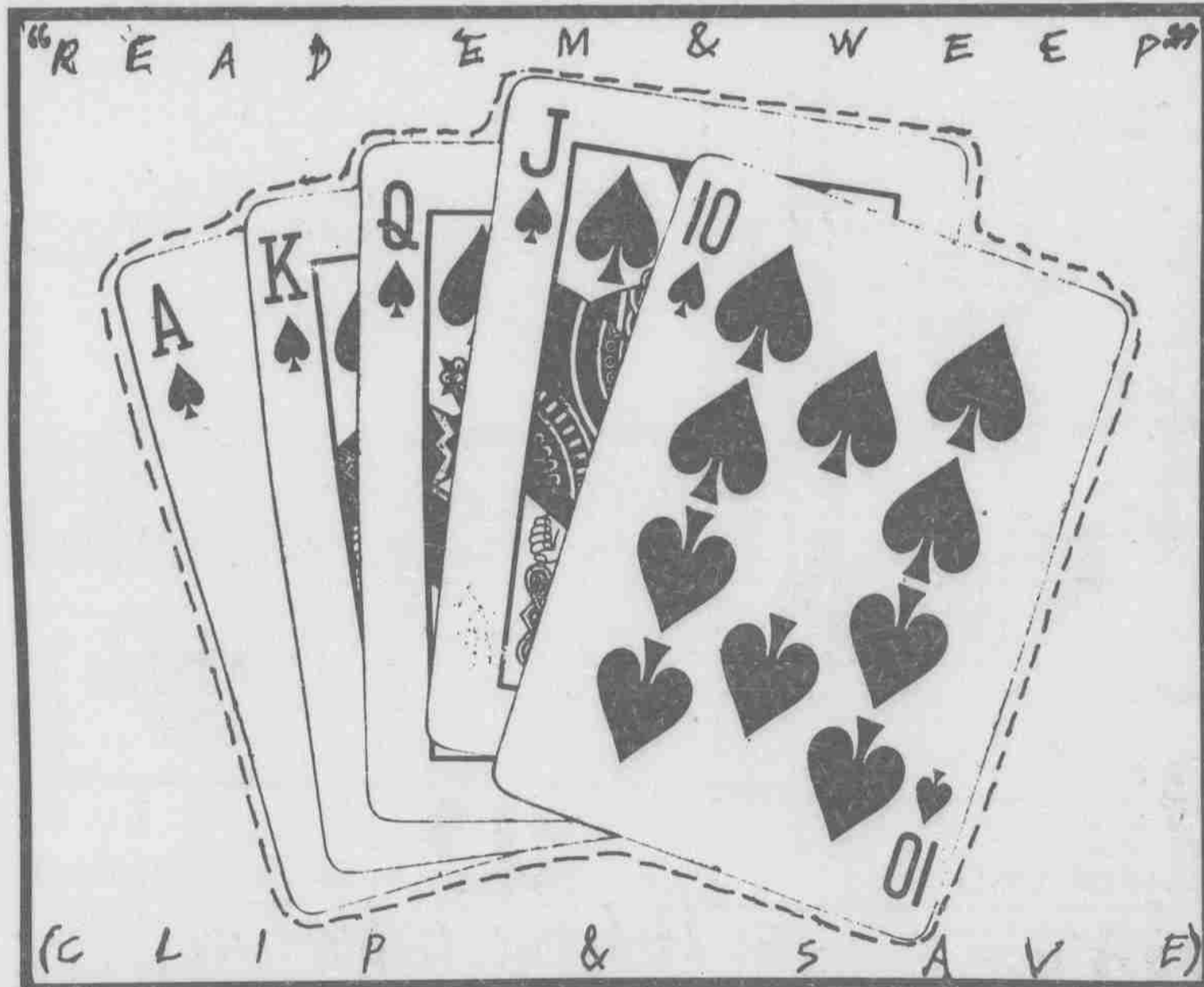
Although the actual number of club members is unknown, 26 people showed interest at the recent Activities Festival in the Nebraska Union.

Club dues, determined by mem-

bers, will cover costs of cards, cribbage boards, score pads and trophies used in tournaments.

Besides trying to organize leagues from various housing units, Weissert said, a Vegas Weekend is in the cards for the future. The Weekend event will feature poker, blackjack and other traditional Las Vegas card games. Money raised in the event will go to charity, Gissler said.

Meeting times for Highrollers will be announced in the Daily Nebraskan.



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