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'Ghosts' of old controversies still concern in modern society

By Lise Olsen
 Senior Reporter

One of the most controversial and censored plays of its time, "Ghosts," will be presented by the University Theatre Thursday through Saturday and Nov. 11 thru 16 at 8 p.m. in the Studio Theatre of the Temple Building. "Ghosts" is not about supernatural beings. Rather, it is about the ghosts of outdated ideas which haunt a woman and her son, director Shannon Sabel said.

Record Review

When Henrik Ibsen wrote the play in the 19th century its themes of women's rights and venereal disease were "unspeakable."

That outrage is not gone, said Sabel, a master of fine arts candidate, however, the play's messages can easily be transferred to modern contexts.

"It confronts a number of interests that we're still confronting," Sabel said.

Ibsen, considered the father of modern theater and of realism was a social reformer and an early advocate of women's rights, Sabel said.

The play tells the story of Mrs. Alving, a woman who has been "living a lie" for more than 30 years. Marcia Grund, an associate professor of theatre arts and dance plays Mrs. Alving. Mrs. Alving pretends her dear late husband was a saint. As the play evolves, the true nature of Captain Alving and his continuing evil influence on his widow and her son is revealed.

Mrs. Alving's only confidant, the moralistic Pastor Manders, is played by Fredrick Rubick, an MFA student.

The play takes place in a single day — the day the son, Oswald, returns home after years in a Paris school.

Back at home Oswald slowly learns about his father's true nature.

The play's setting reflects the psychological tension created by Mrs. Alving's false life, Sabel said.

The set, designed by Thomas C. Umfrid, an assistant professor of theater arts/dance, is a greenhouse. No plants are grown inside the house; instead its shelves are stocked with shells.

In spite of the seriousness of its themes, the play has comic moments, Sabel said. Some of the comic relief is provided by Engstrand, a low life carpenter played by Bill Trotter, an MFA candidate. Sabel describes him as "slimy, funny and honest."

Engstrand's daughter, Regina, is played by Treva Tegtmeier, a senior



Rubick and Grund in a scene from "Ghosts."

theatre arts major. Regina is an attractive self-centered "maid," who becomes involved with Oswald.

Costumes for the production are by Bette Skewis, lighting and sound is by Phil Oglesby and Scott Pannier. All are

MFA design students.

Tickets for "Ghosts" are on sale weekdays and on performance nights at the University Theatre box office on the first floor of the Temple Building, 12th and R streets.

Seeing life's absurdities a salvation; all the world needs a satirist

"The Rocky Horror Picture Show" celebrated its 10th anniversary last weekend, indicating that satire is still alive and loved in America.

To me, satire, parody and wit are three of life's greatest riches. There is nothing more intellectually stimulating and satisfying than a satirical novel, play, poem, film or song. I would rather read a book by John Irving, watch "Eating Raoul" or listen to Nina Hagen than attend a party, "do" drugs or have sex — three of what I consider life's most boring activities.



Scott Harrah

My definition of satire is an attitude or project that rashly ridicules life's absurdities, while ridiculing the attitude in the process.

Satirists often are accused of being overly "judgmental" or "subjective." In my opinion, the reason for this is that people can't deal with being exposed or mocked, even if what's being lampooned is in desperate need of harmless old-fashioned ridicule.

Are horror films too grand to be exaggerated and made into parodies like "Rocky Horror"? And if religions like Christianity are so forgiving, why

should the makers of a spoof like Monty Python's "Life of Brian" be condemned to hell just because it made fun of something sacred? When that film came out, people like my hometown pastor thought the cast would receive harsh treatment on Judgment Day because they had "mocked the Lord."

If forming one's opinion and making judgments or casual parody is indeed a sin, then every writer, artist and satirist is going to hell.

There are numerous satirists who have enraged millions and probably will be down wallowing in the flames with me. There's screenwriter and film producer John Waters who has satirized nearly everything in such campy cult classics as "Polyester," "Mondo Trasho," and "Pink Flamingos," which all star a 300-pound transvestite named Divine.

And there are writers like Kurt Vonnegut Jr. who have received critical acclaim for farces on sex, outerspace and war. Also, feminist novelist Rita Mae Brown, was one of the first writers to satirize sexism.

Perhaps the greatest satirist ever is "artist" Andy Warhol. Now here's a guy who creates pure tripe and receives profuse praise from the art world. The only thing that's "brilliant" about Warhol is his super-satirical attitude. Warhol obviously knows the true meaning of satire because he seems to deem the world as absurd, and his art is

merely an imitation of his self-perceived environment.

That's what I love about satirists — they see the absurdity that's present in everything, and they have the moxie to expose it. Granted, satire makes judgments, but those judgments often are only questions, not answers.

It's impossible to totally explain everything in life, but it's both easy and necessary to point out the humor in it. Satire sobers us up and shows us that the things we consider sacred aren't always so impeccable. Look deep into the glories of life and you'll find a travesty hidden beneath all that gloss.

I've always subscribed to the notion that everything is a joke in some way, so everything deserves to be laughed at. This attitude has always created static for me, but I'm rarely scathed by it.

As Oscar Wilde once so eloquently put it: "You've either got to amuse people, feed them or shock them." To the person that looks at the world with sardonic eyes, social static is merely an indication that the sleepy absurd planet has been woken up for a moment.

Who needs some abysmal T.V. sitcom for comedy? Reality itself is hysterical enough. If you really want to see humor, just observe people on any street in any city for a half hour. If you're still not convinced, go stare at a mirror. I do this daily, and what I see in the mirror is the most ridiculous thing in the world. Try it sometime!

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