



Erik Unger/DN

Alex Gelman, assistant professor of theatre, arts and dance, follows along in the script while his graduate acting class rehearses.

## Explorations in direction

### Desire for theatrical freedom guides professor to UNL

By Gretchen McCulley  
Staff Reporter

Alex Gelman said he disagrees with a long-standing belief that directing can't be taught.

An assistant professor of theatre, arts and dance, Gelman has taught at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for one year. He said he has "put my money where my mouth is" with a new program to teach graduate students how to direct theatrical productions.

"I saw an incredibly unique opportunity to put together and train directors," he said. "I'm just glad they (fellow co-workers) thought well enough of me to make it happen."

Along with recruiting and interviewing students for the new three-year directing program, Gelman is also producing *Theatrix*. *Theatrix* gives students a chance to direct, which Gelman said he considers one of the least explored crafts.

Before Gelman started his career in educational theater, he worked for

six years in professional theater in New York.

"I did legitimate theater, musicals, operas, even directed films," Gelman said. "I made a point to jump at every opportunity that was different from the one just completed."

Gelman said he switched from professional theater to educational theater because he wanted to be more involved in dictating what types of plays would be done.

"I'm now in the position to pick the types of plays I want to do," Gelman said. "I have the first choice."

There also are other benefits to teaching theater, Gelman said.

"Being in educational theater tends to bring more money," he said. "In professional theater, the biggest expense is the people. With educational (theater), the people don't cost anything. On the other hand, money spent on scenery is far greater. It's sort of a trade-off."

Another difference between educational theater and professional theater, Gelman said, is that educational theater allows for riskier material and larger cast plays.

Gelman, who lived in Russia until he was age 13, said he was brought up around the theater in which his grandparents participated. Gelman's grandmother worked as a costume designer in an opera theater studio.

"I think my first steps were taken in the theater in that studio," Gelman said. "Ever since then, it has been like a disease."

The theater atmosphere influenced him greatly, he said. Gelman's parents, though not involved professionally, were avid theater-goers, he said.

In 1973, Gelman and his family moved to Israel for two years before coming to the United States in 1976.

Exiting the Soviet Union wasn't easy, Gelman said, but from 1971 on, a certain percentage of people were allowed to leave. Growing up in Russia gave Gelman some insight

about the differences between American theater and Russian theater.

"There is such a rich, theatrical tradition in Russia," he said. "Artists, such as directors, actors, actresses, etc., were held in high esteem. There were some theaters in Moscow and Leningrad that you could never get tickets for because everybody else had them. Theater was the place to be."

This rich, theatrical tradition is something Gelman said he wants to bring to the university. He said his goal is to do more than train those who will work in theater. It also is important to train those who will go to the theater to see the performances.

Training students to come to the theater when they are young will help keep theater alive, Gelman said.

"People have been predicting the end of theater for a long time," he said. "Film hasn't killed it, television hasn't killed it and radio hasn't killed it. I think it will be around for awhile."

## Short story book shows surreal land of the future



"In The Air"  
Robert Nichols  
The Johns Hopkins University Press

By Mark Baldridge  
Senior Reporter

Robert Nichols lives in an America populated by monsters, creatures of the American dream. He writes about it in "In The Air," his first collection of short stories.

His is an America where everything has already happened; the present slips into the past tense. Everything is viewed from a safe distance and puzzled over.

His Americans are thoughtful and naive, utopians and farmers. Yet somehow all this evil exists. So much evil, in fact, that it pools in places, creating "anomalies."

In one of the stories, "Reading the Meter," an old man discovers on his electric bill: "Eight people killed in the village of Jinotoca, Nicaragua. Externalities \$31." He wonders how the cost can be so low.

In "The Changing Beast," a strange creature, half bear, half goat, terrorizes a local food co-op. Shotgun blasts don't affect it and one of the co-operators claims the beast is only a metaphor for capitalism.

Nichols obviously feels strongly about ecological and human rights issues, but his writing lacks the flatness and hysterical urgency of propaganda.

In his stories, the sense of time running out conflicts with the feeling of having plenty of time to think.

It's like being at the scene of a terrible accident. Things slip into slow motion. One watches and feels nothing.

These are tales of the imagination, visionary glimpses recognizable as the backside of American life.

It's as if Nichols has detected the secret world that always exists within and behind our perceptions of the world. Image becomes reality; to think on a thing may make it so. And the unknown breaks into our every-day existence in startling ways.

Danger and death always are present, but death has lost its horror. It has become a thing that sometimes hap-

See BOOK on 10

## 'Love Crimes' steals from viewers' pockets



"Love Crimes"



By Gerry Beltz  
Staff Reporter

Poor Patrick Bergin. He's fresh out of the exceptional thriller, "Sleeping with the Enemy," and already has been typecast as the "good-looking psychotic next door." This time, he does it for the exceptionally bad film titled "Love Crimes" (Plaza 4, 12th and P streets). Bergin plays a man who assumes

### Lack of suspense, wooden acting kills movie

the name of a famous photographer and entices women to let him photograph them, eventually leading to pictures in degrading and compromising positions. He then rapes them, but they will not press charges because of the impending humiliation.

Sean Young ("Blade Runner" and "A Kiss Before Dying") plays Dana Greenway, a district attorney who puts the conviction above all else, and eventually becomes obsessed with catching Bergin.

Young's acting in this movie is wooden at best, and she delivers her lines like she's still miffed about not getting to play Catwoman in the upcoming "Batman" sequel.

Bergin's portrayal of the "shutterbug psychotic" was just as bad. He

tries to be hypnotic, suave and entrancing, but he fails miserably on all counts.

With the exception of Greenway, very little character development occurs for anyone in the movie. Greenway's flashbacks to a childhood trauma give some insight into her character, but not enough to evoke sympathy. These flashbacks eventually become annoying.

The best performance from this film comes from Arnetia Walker as Detective Johnson, Greenway's "only friend." Unfortunately, her screen time is extremely limited. Also, if you're interested in cameos from former television stars, look for Sonny Shroyner (Enos from "The Dukes of Hazzard") as a plainclothes cop.

Produced and directed by Lizzie Borden, this movie has very little action and no real suspense of which

to speak. The music and lighting are adequate, and the plot moves along at a sadly predictable and plodding pace.

Possibly the only other redeeming quality of this film is that it (briefly) addresses real-life problems. There is a short discussion about the hard-to-define line between date rape and sexual assault, and male chauvinism abounds from start to finish.

If you want to see "Love Crimes," wait for it to come out on video, and use a free rental coupon if you've got one.

'Love Crimes' steals from viewers' pockets.

How fast should you get to that movie?

Ratings on a 1-5 reel scale to the speed of celluloid are:

- 5 reels - Run
- 4 reels - Jog
- 3 reels - Racewalk (See it if you've seen the others)
- 2 reels - Stroll (Bring alternate entertainment source)
- 1 reel - Crawl

Scott Maurer/DN