

OPINION PAGES

Our VIEW

Bedroom antics

Cast, audience handle scene in appropriate way

There were no picketers at the Temple Building last Friday.

No censors or defenders of the religious right. No outraged parenting groups or scads of sign-wielding suppressors of free speech.

Only a group of theatergoers who paid money to watch a play.

And when that play — John Guare's "Six Degrees of Separation" — began, the audience did not hold its collective breath in anticipation of a somewhat controversial nude scene. The people simply watched the events in the lives of Ouisa and Flan Kittredge as they unfolded.

When the scene in question finally occurred — a 30-second event in which a nude man leaves the bedroom of the man he is staying with — there were no horrified gasps or disapproving murmurs. If anything, there was laughter.

Not that the scene warranted laughter exclusively. The man runs from the bedroom, cursing and shouting, threatening the owners whose apartment he has been staying in. The sheer audacity of the act, however, is what is intended.

The scene is then over, and the play moves on. So do the minds of the audience, as they forgot about the stir NU Regent Robert Allen of Hastings had made about the scene, which Director Tice Miller had described as "very important to the character and the story line."

Of course, the question remains whether the scene was in fact essential to the play's content, as it is only a brief shock in a well-written and engaging story. But regardless of the scene's necessity, both the audience and the cast handled themselves well in dealing with it.

Perhaps not so composed was Allen, who repeatedly displayed his concern about whether the nudity in the production was appropriate. Allen said he was worried some students may be forced to attend the play against their wishes for class credit, or that some audience members would be unaware of the play's explicit content.

Dick Durst, dean of the College of Fine and Performing Arts, said last week that Allen had nothing to worry about. Advertisements distinctly portrayed the fact that harsh language and sexual situations were a part of the play's content, and no one under age 17 would be allowed into the Howell Theatre without an adult. With those precautions, Durst said, Allen's concerns should be limited.

Durst was right.

The Howell filled up by show time, with little — if any — propaganda denouncing the play's extensive use of explicit language and sexual situations (with most of those dealing with homosexuality).

The students of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the residents of Lincoln as a whole did more last weekend than any number of picketers or censors possibly could. They showed that they could observe and appreciate the points of view and actions of many different people without showing scorn in any way.

Hopefully, it is a trend that will continue.

Mehsling's VIEW



Enemy without Rape brings identity to 'other person'



JOSHUA GILLIN is a junior news-editorial and English major and a Daily Nebraskan associate news editor.

A year ago this Friday, I met a monster.

His name is not important; I didn't even know it when I first met him.

What mattered was what the monster did to me, my life, and the people I love.

You see, a year ago this Friday, I met a woman whom I would grow to care about very much. She is a beautiful, vivacious creature; a wonderful person who, when she doesn't dwell on the state of her life, is an inspiration to me and all those who care enough to look deeply and see her strength.

A week after I met her, she was raped by her next-door neighbor.

I was quick to learn about this, and although she would not hear of police involvement — a mixture of doubt, fear and anger contributed to that — I wanted him to pay. I could, of course, do nothing.

A summer of hurt and rage and confusion punctuated this last year of my life, and I cast several doubts on my own feelings. I felt guilty and enraged and depressed.

What could I do?

All the textbooks say I displayed a typical response, but that's no

excuse for me. I used to pride myself on being able to keep calm and rational at all times. Times change, though.

Now, a year later, I am left feeling empty and afraid. Afraid for her, whom I haven't seen in months. Afraid for my relatives, whom I do not see for weeks at a time. Afraid for my friends, whom I see every day.

But — and this may sound strange — I fear for those closest to my female friends, be their boyfriends or fiancés or husbands. In a secret corner of my mind, I worry for those who may have to experience things similar to how I felt.

As I write this, a group of my female co-workers stands chatting and working. They are most likely oblivious to the possibility that such an attack may happen to them. Their boyfriends probably are, as well.

That's how life has to be; if you were afraid of such horrible things all the time, you probably would never leave the house. For a short time, though, that's what my life was like. I worried that the horrible "thing" could get her again, that if I left her alone for too long, she would become completely unraveled.

Unfortunately, I was the one who became unraveled.

I was thinking the other day that my life has proceeded rather well since then, following a path that has generally taken me where I want to. From what I hear, my friend has gotten along well, too.

But in a corner of my mind the fear lurks continuously. There are issues and concerns I have now I did not have a year ago, but I think I am a better person because of them.

If only I could make those around me understand the compassion I feel now because of that dreadful experience. Such pain and confusion is something I would never wish on

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There is something innately filthy and discomfiting about rape that I'll never be able to put my finger on. Maybe it's the fact that there are few physical indications of its occurrence. Maybe it's because rape's such an embarrassing subject to talk about. Maybe it's because I hear the stories of those it has happened to and secretly heave a sigh because it's not someone I know.

That's not exactly true now, though. For me, rape has a name and a face and an address. So does the rapist.

For me, rape is a beautiful girl I once cared about very much. Rape is a girl I still care about, and know very well, but she is a shadow. She is off on the horizon with a face I know I recognize yet can't distinguish. She is a friend, and she is in pain.

As for the rapist, he lives next door to rape. He has a name and a face and a home and a television set. He is very much like any other man I've ever met, except that he hurts the girl I so dearly care about. Other than that, he is as normal as any man.

And that — not rape, I suppose — is what scares me the most.

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