

## A & E Opinion



Liza Holtmeier

### UNL dance program deserves resources

What kind of message is the UNL administration sending out? Recently, University of Nebraska-Lincoln faculty members have complained about the "top-down" budget reallocations, which have trimmed the budgets of departments all over campus.

The UNL dance program has not been exempt from this matter. However, the program's predicament involves more than money.

Last fall, the situation became so precarious that rumors of the possible dissolution of the dance major seeped through the College of Fine and Performing Arts. Plans were discussed to stop the enrollment of new freshman dance majors and to decrease the program's offerings to a dance minor.

You see, for a small program, the request to trim an already lean budget creates more than just fingernail-biting and handkerchief-wringing. It's not a matter of simply shuffling some priorities to maintain the status quo. For a small program, budget cuts involve a major overhaul - hence, the speculation that the dance major would cease to exist.

Luckily, it's still here. Thanks to the problem-solving skills of Charlotte Adams, former dance director, and dance Professor Lisa Fusillo, the program has been given another chance. It remains to be seen how long that chance will last.

This fall, the dance program proceeds without its director and exists in limbo between two departments. A new director will not arrive until the College of Fine and Performing Arts conducts a national search. The NU Board of Regents is waiting to vote on a recommendation to move the program from the theater to the music department.

Though the dance program has received the budget to continue, it may lack what it needs most - moral support.

The constant speculation and upheaval in the dance program has left many students and faculty wondering if the fate of the program is a priority ... even though it's the only program in the state that offers a major in dance ... even though it has maintained a graduation rate almost equaling the rate of incoming freshmen ... even though its students have gone on to dance with prestigious companies and to work in arts administration.

The resignation of Charlotte Adams as dance program director is one piece of evidence signaling a lack of administrative support. Adams, who served as director for 2½ years, said she resigned because her goals for the program

Please see DANCE on 17



"Jeffrey," a comic-romantic look at modern gay society coping with AIDS, was among the many avant-garde and experimental plays that appeared at the now-defunct Futz Theatre.

## Futz Theatre closing leaves void

### Other local venues attempt to fill avant-garde shoes

BY LIZA HOLTMEIER  
Staff writer

It may be a while before "The Lesbian Vampires of Sodom" returns to Lincoln.

The Futz Theatre, known for its productions of cutting-edge theater such as "Vampires," shut its doors for the last time in May.

Its closing signals an end to an era of contemporary theater in Lincoln. "Theater has always been meant to create dialogue between parties," explained Robin McKercher, artistic director at Lincoln Community Playhouse. "A lot of commercial theaters feel the need to stay away from that kind of material, because they feel they might offend an audience. The Futz was not afraid to explore any of those shows."

Those shows included productions such as "Quills," about the last days of the Marquis de Sade, and "Children of a Lesser God," the struggle of a deaf woman and her teacher to find common ground on which to communicate.

The Futz's portion of the avant-garde helped to complete the balanced diet of theater the Lincoln community offers.

"It's important that theater audiences have a broad cross-section of opportunity to see material from the Greeks to the present day," said Julie Hagemeyer, theater manager for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln theater department. "They have to see all types of theater to be well-rounded, educated citizens."

The Futz also provided a forum for playwrights by serving as a show-

case for new works. McKercher said the theater community has lost more and more playwrights to television and movies - mediums more willing to explore progressive works. Theaters such as the Futz encourage new talent to work in theater.

The Futz also provided a low cost alternative to produce new theater. Bob Hall, who directed "Frankenstein" in March at the Futz, said he chose the space because of the low financial risk.

"One can gain a lot from doing something where a great deal of money is not on the line. We were looking to get 'Frankenstein' in front of 200 people - to test the waters for a new script," Hall said. "At the Futz, you could do it all on a credit card and make the money back."

With all the acclaim the Futz received, some may wonder why owner Paul Pearson decided to close the theater.

Pearson said he tired of carrying the torch for the whole community.

"I wanted my time back to myself," Pearson said. "There were other projects that I wanted to do. I couldn't run the Futz by myself unless that was the only thing I did."

Eventually, Pearson thinks he will embark on a venture similar to the Futz. For now, his No. 1 goal is to clean his house. After that, he'll be busy preparing the costume shop, Fringe and Tassel, 735 O St., for the Halloween season. Until then, he said, he won't even have the chance to miss having a theater.

Various Lincoln theaters plan to attempt to fill the gap left by the Futz.

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JULIE HAGEMIER  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln theater manager

The Lincoln Community Playhouse plans to produce a Gallery Season of contemporary plays next spring and summer.

The avant-garde season will open with "How I Learned to Drive," a play by Paula Vogel that won the 1998 Pulitzer Prize for Drama award. The play, set in Maryland in the 1960s, explores the relationship between L'il Bit and her Uncle Peck, a pedophile.

The next Gallery play will be "Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde," written by Moisés Kaufman. The play depicts the arrest and sentencing of Oscar Wilde to two years in prison because of his sexual preferences.

"Raised in Captivity," written by Nicky Silver, will be the final play presented in the Gallery Season.

"The play is a rather wicked, satirical view of middle-class society," McKercher explained. "(Silver) is not afraid to make people upset. He's been called the Oscar Wilde of our generation."

Though the season consists of new works, it still lacks the daring and often outrageous element that made the Futz.

Hagemier said UNL's Theatrx

season comes closest to presenting the progressive works like those produced by the Futz. However, she said, Theatrx can't take the risks the Futz did because it has certain requirements associated with UNL's theater department.

The Futz's space also created an intimacy and immediacy that is difficult to duplicate. The farthest audience member was 8 feet away from the cast.

"You couldn't go away from what was happening in that theater at all," Hagemier said. "Your mind can drift off in other theaters. The Futz put you right in the middle of the action."

In contrast, the Studio Theatre, where most of the Theatrx productions are performed, is twice the size of the Futz.

The Futz also had an audience and a community of volunteers that was indigenous to it. Drawing those people into a new venue may be difficult.

For a small theater, the Futz certainly seemed to accomplish an immense task.

"We were still the best-kept little secret in Lincoln," Pearson said.

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