

All-female cast enlivens performance of 'Godot'

BY LIZA HOLTMEIER
Staff writer

Women can do almost anything as well as men, sometimes better.

This includes playing the traditionally male roles in Samuel Beckett's "Waiting For Godot."

The all-female cast of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln production brought a heightened tenderness and truth to Beckett's classic work Saturday.

This gender twist on Beckett's classic examination of modern life kicked off the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance main-stage season this weekend and continues its production tonight through Saturday.

Though the women in the cast kept their characters gender-neutral in many aspects, the audience could not help pondering the differences of a female interpretation. Those differences included a sensitivity that capitalized on the way women interact.

In the play, two hobos wait on a country road for a being named Godot. They attempt to pass the time by fighting, joking and conversing with

Theater

travelers, but time continues to drag on. The two periodically receive word that Godot will be indeterminately late, forcing the characters into an inescapable cycle of exhausting suspense.

Beckett poses essential existential questions to the audience: Why are we here? What are we waiting for? When will it come? But he balances the weighty material with a light, clowning approach.

The show's success depends on the actors' ability to balance these two elements.

Sasha Dobson and Moira Mangiameli, who play the bums Estragon and Vladimir, achieved the perfect harmony between the play's exaggeration and humanity.

As the naïve and often submissive companion of Vladimir, Dobson fluctuated fluidly between wide-eyed clowning and futile depression.

Through her over-enunciated speech and halting walk, she communicated a childlike wonder confined by the mundane experiences of

Estragon's life.

Mangiameli provided the perfect complement to Dobson. She established symmetry with Vladimir's boisterousness and despair by her subtle inflection and deliberate gestures.

Her haughty carriage contrasted the faltering footsteps of Estragon while providing a mask for Vladimir's fears and lack of knowledge.

The relationship between Dobson and Mangiameli provided the foundation for the play. Sharing their joy, sorrow, disappointment and fear, the two created a poignant relationship courageous in its inability to end.

Amy Rafa punctuated the scenes between Dobson and Mangiameli. Rafa plays the materialistic Pozzo, an amoral, domineering man who terrorizes his servant, Lucky (Amy Johnson).

Pozzo and Lucky pass by the two bums twice during the show, providing temporary relief from their boredom.

Rafa brought Pozzo the required sense of self-importance through her over-confident stance and vocal inflections.

However, her mannerisms lacked the subtlety that made Vladimir's and Estragon's effective. Her greedy laughs and facial expressions

seemed discordant with the rest of the play.

All the actors exhibited a high level of frustration through their characters. Each vacillated easily between earnestness and despair, optimism and resignation.

Jenny D'Agosta's set complemented this portrayal of life's frustrations. Its mud-hued mounds and barren trees were accented by blue sky, white clouds and a bright, resilient moon.

The play provides a moving depiction of humanity's struggle to understand an abstract world.

Most importantly, the cast of women furnished the characters with a naturalness that made the audience forget they were women playing men. It wasn't until after the play that one recognized the subtle benefit of the gender reversal: a relationship between two people that expressed Beckett's sympathy for the human dilemma.

"Waiting for Godot" continues tonight through Saturday at 8 p.m. in the Studio Theatre of the Temple Building. Tickets are \$10 for general admission, \$9 for faculty/staff/senior citizens and \$6 for students. For reservations, call the Temple Box Office at (402) 472-2073.

Record store owner plans move to Web

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estimated he spent three hours a day on the computer doing business. Between that and managing the record store, Loos began to feel the vice of time tighten around him.

"One jar of peanut butter can't cover a hundred sandwiches," Loos said with a laugh.

The advantages of putting all of his resources toward his online store surpassed the advantages of keeping his existing store open. Since his site appeared, Loos has received orders from Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Argentina and Brazil.

"I had this guy from Germany buy a Rolling Stones and Miles Davis album," Loos said, "and he's asking me for a second order."

But life on the Internet isn't exactly cyber-bliss, either.

While Loos spent more than 10 years building up clientele in Lincoln, he now is making a fresh start on the Web. Because of this, Loos expects to sell fewer albums to Internet customers than his regular in-store customers for at least two years.

"It's not all gravy," Loos assured.

Some other drawbacks included the tedious task of converting his entire collection to the database and filling out extra paperwork when he receives an order from another country. But Loos said the thing he would miss most would be the face-to-face interaction with customers — and so will his legions of loyal patrons.

"Honestly, a lot of customers are not really happy I'm leaving," Loos said.

Mike Nebel, a senior math major from Lincoln, has been frequenting Backtrack Records since it opened.

As he was fishing through the dozens of slightly dusty, plastic-wrapped albums, Nebel said he would miss coming to the store, which he visited at least once a week.

"It's a Saturday morning routine," Nebel said, "You can buy three used albums here for the price of a new CD."

Mike Debus, an employee for nearly a year, said Backtrack had a loyal core of customers, but added the demand for vinyl in Lincoln is not very high.

"People in Lincoln don't have many turntables anymore," Debus said.

Debus believes Backtrack's closing was not due to competition from larger stores, such as Best Buy and Homer's, which don't sell much vinyl to begin with.

Loos has not yet set the date to close Backtrack Records and said he is still willing to sell the store, which includes 30,000 albums of overstock. For now, people can thumb through the thousands of albums in the store and take in the smells of old cardboard and vinyl for at least a couple more weeks.

After the store closes, Loos said he would devote his time exclusively to maintaining his Web site.

"When I'm asleep, the store will be open," Loos said.

New Releases

PJ Harvey
"Is This Desire?"
Island Records
Grade: A-

Much like the water traveling down through the Mississippi Delta, the sweet murmurs of Polly Jean Harvey refuse to be silenced.

In each of her albums, she has challenged fans to follow her newest musical meanderings, which are heavily influenced by the delta blues artists of the early 20th century.

Fans of her blues-soaked and abrasive earlier releases, "Dry" and "Rid of Me," were probably taken aback by her rich, almost theatrical follow-up album, "To Bring You My Love."

And fans of "To Bring You My Love" were probably taken aback by the spooky experimentation of "Dance Hall at Louse Point," in which she collaborated with John Parish, the mastermind behind many of the intricate percussion arrangements, on her most recent release, "Is This Desire?"

"Is This Desire?" employs the same giant themes seen on previous albums: love, lust, guilt, persecution and religion. And with each of these, Harvey sings about how they can both liberate people and destroy them as well.

None of this would be interesting if Harvey couldn't rock. Fortunately, "Is This Desire?" is PJ Harvey's most rocking album in years. "The Sky Lit Up" and "A Perfect Day Elise" are propelled by Parish's sparse drumming and Harvey's distorted, heavy guitar playing.

The newest musical element Harvey adds to "Is This Desire?" is her flirtation with electronica. Fear not, this is not Harvey's version of "Ray of Light." On tracks "Electric Light" and "No Girl So Sweet," electronic elements are used, but never to the point where they dominate the song.

The electronic element was more than likely suggested by Flood, the master producer of U2 and the Smashing Pumpkins. This is Flood's second time as producer of Harvey's solo work. "To Bring You My Love" marked the first time the two worked together. Though he accepted much of the abrasiveness of Harvey's earlier works, he added a stronger sense of control to her work.

Another obvious influence in Harvey's musical approach is her association with Nick Cave, a musician who could make Portishead sound downright cheery. This is especially evident in the lush and paganistic imagery of "The

Garden."

That song, along with "The River," showcases Harvey's obsession with religious imagery. And like past blues greats, Harvey keeps the metaphors vague, forcing the listener to provide thought to her frequently opaque lyrics.

The chorus of "The Garden" is simple, "and there was trouble taking place." But with Harvey's voice, she doesn't need further explanation. You don't need to be a poet if your voice sounds like an apocalyptic warning straight from the mouth of Hera.

Throughout the album, Harvey's voice remains in top form. Her vocal range may not be on the scale of her peers, but whenever she sings, it sounds like it's coming from the deepest and darkest part of her innards. She groans, she growls, she wails, and it never gets old.

Like her earlier releases, it's not going to sink in on the first listen. One of Harvey's greatest talents is her ability to keep an audience on its toes. She has gone through so many style changes, listeners tend to be on guard. Once you get that first time out of the way, however, "Is This Desire?" becomes more like a passion.

— Sean McCarthy

Nabokov's son suing 'Lolita' parodist

NEW YORK (AP) — Sequels to "Gone With the Wind" and "Casablanca" have come off without a catch — but a retold "Lolita" is fanning a hot legal affair.

The son of novelist Vladimir Nabokov has sued an Italian woman for parodying the story of a professor sexually obsessed with a 12-year-old girl — from the child's point of view.

"Lo's Diary" by Pia Pera, according to a lawsuit seeking to ban its U.S. publication, is "a ripoff."

Not quite, says attorney Leon Friedman, who represents New York publisher Farrar, Straus & Giroux. "It's funny. It's a parody. It adds something new, with different characters," he said Saturday.

The original narrator, Professor Humbert Humbert, becomes Humbert Guibert, and he doesn't kill Clare, the evil playwright who lures Lolita away; and Clare, a man in the original, returns as Filthy Sue.

Dolores Maze, a.k.a. Lolita, is now Dolores Haze. And she's a blatant little seductress with come-hither techniques: "Swing a foot back and forth, flutter your eyelids, fan yourself, snap your fingers to the music, blow a bubble then suck the gum slowly back into your mouth."

Unlike Nabokov's 1955 book, the professor and "Lo" don't die.

"We don't take any language from 'Lolita,' and we transformed the story."

LEON FRIEDMAN
attorney for Farrar, Straus & Giroux Publishing

"They all stick around, and she gets married and has a child and she's happy," Friedman said.

The lawsuit accusing Pera and her publisher of copyright and trademark infringement was filed Thursday in federal court in New York by Nabokov's estate, represented by his son, Dmitri Nabokov, a race car driver who lives in Florida. The lawsuit also names Italian and British publishers of the book, published in Italy in 1995.

The book is "inferior and amateurish merchandise" that tarnishes the reputation of a work that has sold about 50 million copies in more than 20 languages, according to court documents submitted by the plaintiff.

Friedman maintains the 310-page English language manuscript falls within "fair use" standards set by the U.S. Supreme Court to protect intellectual property through copyright;

the French copyright on "Lolita" runs out in 2030.

"We don't take any language from 'Lolita,' and we transformed the story," said Friedman.

Besides, the 42-year-old author said in a statement from her home in the Tuscan hills, it was Nabokov himself who inspired her to probe the provocative nymph's mind for her first novel.

In "Lolita," the Russian-born novelist who died in 1977 had his narrator, Humbert Humbert, admit: "I simply did not know a thing about my darling's mind." And he wished, "Oh, that I were a lady writer who could have her pose naked in a naked light."

Enter an Italian lady who shed her own light on Lolita.

"All I did," she said, "was to accept Nabokov's challenge, his implied invitation to a literary tennis match."

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