

Behind the mask

Masquers' plays focus on lives of 20-somethings

BY LIZA HOLTMEIER
Senior staff writer

Write about what you know.

The four playwrights chosen for this year's Masquers' One Acts adhere to this age-old advice.

Each one of the plays, to be performed next week, takes a different look at the lives of 20-somethings, exploring how their generation feels about love, death, family and success.

"They're not about something distant from our experience," said Greg Peters, the event's producer.

The evening begins with "9 Characters In Search of an Opera." Written by sophomore theater major John Elsener, the play satirizes middle-class suburban life.

The crazy cast of characters includes a housewife whose husband is a cat and an incompetent amateur director. In the play, all nine of the characters meet for an evening at the opera.

The play's director, Sherry Dill, said Elsener based the show's characters on easily identifiable stereotypes.

"People in the audience will go, 'A-ha! That's my girlfriend!' Or, 'A-ha! That's someone else I know!'" Dill said.

But despite their quirky, overplayed qualities, Dill said, the characters seem very real.

Contrasting the zany comedy of Elsener's script is "Dark Rooms." The play, written by sophomore theater major Jody Christopherson, follows a couple on a pivotal evening in their lives. The story centers on people's inability to trust each other in love, director Emily Williams said.

"A lot of people these days have a misconstrued idea of love," Williams said. "I think that's why so many marriages end up in divorce."

The play exposes love's misconceptions and how our pasts often interfere with our ability to reach others.

Williams said the play attracted her because of its realistic dialogue.

"A lot of times, I read a play and think, 'Nobody would ever say that in real life,'" she said.

And although the play deals with some weighty ideas, Williams said, its characters are able to find humor in even the most serious situations.

Following Christopherson's play is "Gods on the Level," written by Jay Gish, a senior in the jour-



EMILY WILLIAMS (left), DARYN WARNER AND SHERRY DILL are directing three different plays for the UNL Department of Theatre Arts' production Masquers' One-Acts. There are a total of four short plays. The fourth is directed by Jacob Crabb. Masquers' One-Acts opens April 8 with additional shows April 9 and 10.

RICK TOWNLEY/DN

nalism college.

In the play, the now-forgotten gods Zeus and Athena take a look at the Slacker Generation. They watch as three friends drift apart when one of them enters a relationship.

"It deals with people who are young enough to have hope for the future, but who are too young to make their dreams happen," Peters said.

The evening ends with "Lonely Hearts Diner," a poignant play written by Justin Bottsford, a senior in arts and sciences.

In the play, the success of a 20-something is cut short when she is beaten to death by transients. She and God watch as the people she left behind reminisce about her life.

Daryn Warner, the director, said the play challenges the audience in a variety of ways.

"The play is really religiously ambiguous," Warner said. "It questions family ties, the meaning of success and what happens after life."

Like the other three plays, "Lonely Hearts Diner" approaches these subjects from a distinctly youthful point of view.

Given the four plays' common perspective, this year's Masquers' One Acts may be the most unified in form and content.

"I think, by the end of the evening, the overall atmosphere will be stronger than in years past," Warner said. "This year, there's an actual progression from one play to the next."

Theater Preview The Facts



What: Masquers' One-Acts

Where: Howell Theatre

When: April 8-10 at 7:30 p.m.

Cost: \$3

The Skinny: The UNL Masquers present four plays about our generation



Claire Danes, Giovanni Ribisi and Omar Epps star in the totally stylish but utterly empty "Mod Squad," directed by Scott Silver.

COURTESY PHOTO

'Mod Squad' needs a death squad

Modern stylistic features can't save 70s TV offshoot film

BY SAM MCKEWON
Senior editor

"The Mod Squad" started a trend of so many bad television shows, the worst being "David Cassidy - Man Undercover," starring David Cassidy. Let us all hope that the new movie, which is a pretty uninspired piece of "ultramod" filmmaking, doesn't resurrect Donny Osmond's career.

It's hard to say what inspired the making of the "Mod Squad." Maybe it was the relative success of other films born from TV success such as "Mission Impossible" and "The Fugitive." Maybe it was the young cast of Giovanni Ribisi, Omar Epps and Claire Danes. Maybe it was ... oh, God, it doesn't even matter what it was because "The Mod Squad" is a mindless film.

It creates no new insights. Its subject matter is hardly exciting. It's a boring mess of a film, which is a shame, because the film looks quite fresh. "Mod," if you will,

Film Review The Facts



Title: "The Mod Squad"

Stars: Claire Danes, Omar Epps, Giovanni Ribisi

Director: Scott Silver

Rating: R

Grade: D+

Five Words: "Mod" not cool, just there

That's true to some extent, as director Scott Silver creates a film that, more than anything, exudes the idea of style more than anything else. The script doesn't matter as much as how the movie looks. Everything about it and everything that surrounds it: the trailer, the jeans commercial, the poster - it all gives into style.

"Mod Squad" is just thin, that's all. It follows the three aforementioned stars as former miscreants turned undercover cops. Julie (Danes) would be basically

the leader, as dictated by the fact that neither Ribisi nor Epps have been near the screen's presence.

Run by the tough-love cop Adam Greer (Dennis Farina) the squad, as they were, is asked to infiltrate a club where it's thought a big prostitution ring is located.

Greer gets killed. The squad gets worried. We wonder what it could be. Police corruption? It's "Serpico" all over again.

The film does look slick, and everything is a near re-creation of the 1970s, when the show hit its peak popularity. But this movie, by its end, still begs the question: Why now? Why ever?

"The Mod Squad" simply is not one of the films that lends itself to being remade. Too many teen films, coupled with too many dark-cop films lately, make this a movie without a clear audience.

The script's bad, the action's tired and hopeless, and the "The Mod Squad," for as cool as it wants to be, is a tedious 90 minutes to sit through.