

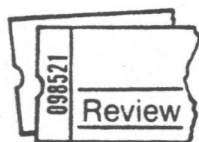
'Stone's Throw' effective, uncomfortable production

Oct. 29, 1986

By Larry Kubert
Journal Reviewer

There are three reasons why "A Stone's Throw," now on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Studio Theatre stage, is such a strikingly effective, albeit uncomfortable, production — local playwright David Boles' marvelous script, Thomas Umfrid's intricate scene design and involved performances from an efficient cast.

If Boles' drama is any indication of the standard of his playwriting abilities, the UNL junior has a prestigious career ahead for himself.



His grasp of character personality and manipulation of language is disquietingly proficient as his

gutsy and gritty writing brutalizes the audience's sensibilities.

The play deftly picks at the festering and caked scabs of a family at the edge of civilization — the refuse of society, a dung-heap of existence. Mama-Love has turned to alcohol for solace, "sorrow water in a ketchup bottle"; the daughter Elfreda and the youngest son, Dillion, share an incestuous bed; and the older son, Tully, the saint and the family's only hope for redemption from their situation betrays them, returning home after being dismissed from college. And everyday, townspeople attack the family's existence by pitching rocks through their windows, metaphorically destroying their fragile grasp on reality, shattering into tiny shards their dreams of

escape.

It's with great joy and gratification that after a year's hiatus one can again gaze upon the creative genius of Thomas Umfrid's scene designs. There is day and night, and then there is Umfrid's designs and everyone else's in Lincoln. The designer's top-notch efforts are not simply painted canvas flats which will only get the job done. Instead they are creations which display integrity and personality in furthering the atmosphere of a production. Phil Oglesby's lighting design melds well with the environment created by Umfrid's excellent set and skillfully accentuates these moods.

Under Rex McGraw's detailed direction truly excellent performances are exhibited by Nancy Marcy as Elfreda, Cynthia Totten as Mama-Love, Kevin Paul Hofeditz as Tully and Jay Thornton as Dillion.

It's no surprise when veterans Marcy, Totten and Hofeditz traditionally offer first-rate performances. But Thornton's exceptional portrayal of the youthful Dillion is worthy of special note and encouragement. Ample support is provided by Brent Schawl as Mr. Nettles.

Boles' "A Stone's Throw" is a disturbing and uncomfortable piece of drama, but one where his love and execution of language and intuitive grasp of marrow-chilling intimacy produces a commanding play worthy of respect and patronage.

"A Stone's Throw" will continue its run at the UNL Studio Theatre, 12th and R streets, at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Oct. 28-31; and Nov. 1-2.

Student's tragic play captivates audience

By Lise Olsen
Senior Reporter

"A Stones Throw," the current UNL theater production, is a disconcerting, yet riveting, original play.

The production stars junior theater major Jay Thornton as Dillion, the young boy whose love for his sister and fearful respect for others rules and nearly ruins his life.

Thornton, the youngest member of the cast, is very convincing as the love-struck, innocent Dillion. His efforts, as unimaginable and surrealistic as the character, makes Dillion the most appealing of the play's tragic figures.

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Nancy Marcy as Elfreda, Dillion's beloved sister, also turns in an impressive performance. Elfreda's middle-aged, youthful innocence coupled with her tragic deterioration and loss of hope are convincingly interpreted by Marcy, an MFA candidate.

The set design for the play, a junk-filled old house on the outskirts of Anytown, brilliantly sets the stage for the play. Designer Thomas Umfrid, assistant professor of theater arts, deserves special commendation.

The chaotic clutteredness of the house lends itself well to the strange goings-on inside.

The total of all the cast and crew efforts make the play effective. The bizarre events, and strange and philosophical dialogue fascinated me and seemed to captivate the rest of the audience.

Although the play's subject matter could be considered controversial, no one in the audience left the performance during the on-stage operation called a "cleansing" or during any of the discussions or suggestions of an implied incestuous, yet not necessarily immoral love affair.

Instead, many theatergoers seemed determined from the very first scene to find out just how this play could get any stranger.

It always did. Just when the weird-

ness reached a seeming climax, some other undercurrent would lift its surprising head.

The play is full of surprises, difficult thoughts and strange scenes. It commands attention and respect, *and* it entertains. There are some good laughs, not entirely eclipsed by the play's tragedy.

An example is the bizarre explanation of why Tully, the family's appointed "saintly" older brother, left the university after 17 years.

This production seems to foreshadow future greatness for its playwright David Boles, a junior UNL English major.

There were only a few difficulties on the opening night performance.

Cynthia Totten, a doctoral candidate was convincing as Mamma Love, a role which borders perilously on hysterical disgust and melodrama. She and Mister Nettles, played by MFA student Brent Shawl, seemed to stumble a little with lines and character definition. But, I suppose the lack of identity could have been intentional.

Trouble-making older brother Tully, played Kevin Hofeditz, an assistant professor of theater arts and dance, is convincingly obnoxious.

Yet Thornton and Marcy's excellent performances seemed to overshadow theater cast members' efforts.

Overall, however, the cast does a good job in bringing to life the bizarre outcasts created by Boles.

As Boles said in a recent interview, his play can be interpreted on many different levels. It can be interpreted intellectually, emotionally or philosophically. But it cannot easily be ignored.

The play, as Boles says, is about individual rights and what happens when those rights are violated — when too many stones shatter too many dreams.

The play is effective, thought-provoking and interesting on many different levels. "Stones Throw" audiences should expect almost anything to happen because it often does.

The production performances continue Monday through Saturday at 8 p.m. in the third floor studio theater at the Temple Building.

Tickets are available from the theater box office.

'A Stone's Throw' is dreary, depressing

By Jeff Bahr
of The Lincoln Star

Oct. 30, 1986

Review

"A Stone's Throw," an original work that's making its "world premiere" this week at the Temple Building, is largely disappointing.

The play, written by University of Nebraska-Lincoln student David Boles, is a dreary, depressing drama that offers little in the way of enlightenment or entertainment.

Some people may also consider the University Theater production offensive. It deals at length with the subject of incest, and an apparent abortion is performed in the second act.

The production, staged in the Studio Theater, deals with a troubled family that's been ostracized by society. The family's dilapidated home, located on the outskirts of town, comes under fire each day from members of the community, who throw stones to show their disapproval of the family's lifestyle.

The play examines, with limited success, the reasons for the family's isolation.

The group is headed by Mama-Love (Cynthia Totten), an unhappy woman who spends most of her time in the cellar, drinking her "sorrow water" from ketchup bottles.

UPSTAIRS, two of her offspring are involved in an incestuous relationship. Elfreda (Nancy Marcy) is a young woman who's cared for her half-brother, Dillion, since he was a baby. The lonely woman, who has no one else, has turned to the young man, played by Jay Thornton, for romantic companionship. To show his love for his sister, he brings her

presents from the junkyard.

The oldest son, Tully (Kevin Paul Hofeditz), has just been expelled from the university, where he's spent the last 17 years. Tully had represented his family's sole hope for ending its miserable existence. His degree, Mama-Love thought, would have allowed them to finally move uptown.

Tully, the family's only voice of reason, is appalled to learn that Elfreda is apparently pregnant, and Dillion is the father. The two young lovers don't understand the repercussions of the pregnancy, so Tully spends much of Act 1, Scene 2 explaining to them the facts of life. For most of the audience, one would assume, that explanation is hardly necessary. And neither is attending this play.

"A Stone's Throw" does feature some outstanding performances. Marcy and Hofeditz are both, as usual, exceptional, and Thornton is quite good as Dillion. Only Brent Schawl, who plays the abortionist, is not up to par.

The Studio Theater set, designed by Thomas Umfrid, is amazingly cluttered. It contains, among other things, a variety of old television sets, Christmas lights, old furniture and a photo of Barry Goldwater.

"A Stone's Throw," which opened Thursday night, continues Saturday and Monday through Nov. 2 at 8 p.m. at the Temple Building.