

# Play explores conflicts

By CRAIG JOSEPH  
OLD GOLD AND BLACK REVIEWER

David Mamet plays as tough. Tough for the director, for the actors, for the audience, for the reviewer, on the ears and on the brain.

Perhaps it's the fact that non-sequiturs fly out of the characters' mouths at 50 miles an hour. Perhaps it's that the actors are requested to portray deep and complex emotions and motivations with little concrete dialogue. (Or maybe this reviewer just despises having to discern the social message and commentary implicit within the play when he can't even keep tabs on the plot.)

At any rate, the Anthony Aston Players' recent Ring Theatre production of Mamet's *Oleanna* can be declared a formidable success. Junior Shane Harris, *Oleanna*'s director, has assembled a talented crew of designers and actors to collaborate on a cutting-edge contemporary piece which, while not flawless, demonstrates the high-quality art which students can produce in the laboratory setting.

Juniors Daniel Stern and Jenny Harrison turned in engaging performances as college professor John and his student, Carol. While their conversation at times seemed stilted, anticipated, or perhaps over-rehearsed, they admirably mastered the majority of Mamet's difficult dialogue, catching cadences and rhythms of human speech and making it sound natural. Both actors carried their halves of what seemed a naturally awkward rapport and successfully created an underlying tension to this series of mind games and battles of will.

Stern was very convincing as the egotistical professor. Particularly in the first act, he made use of effective body language and a simpering tone to patronize and condescend to his troubled student. Stern also mastered a quick-fire delivery of difficult lines and concepts, which created the aura of a man in control who liked to flaunt and display his mastery of the English language.

Especially commendable was Stern's ability to portray the rapid disintegration of John; we saw the weakening and desperation which finally pushed him over the edge and drove him to violence.

Occasionally, Stern descended into caricature, losing some credibility as a real character who can elicit hate and frustration, but on the whole his was a strong performance.

Harrison's Carol was one to run away from. Equally effective as a nervous and troubled student or a bright and willful plaintiff, Harrison brought an underlying strength and anger to the role.

Harrison is also to be congratulated on her character's development from scene to scene; she used the end of each meeting to foreshadow and prepare for the more confident Carol who confronts John in the next scene, thus making her metamorphosis gradual and credible, not something simply written in the script.

Senior Aimee Mackovic's costume design also helped amplify Carol's change, as she gradually moved from loose, sloppy college clothing at the play's beginning toward formal, constricted, businesslike clothing at its end.

Director Harris turned in an admirable job as well, effectively blocking Harrison and Stern into a cat-and-mouse game where any crossing or infringement of an invisible boundary by one character sent the other scurrying to the opposite side. The characters were constantly at a face-off until violence erupts at the end. Additionally, the character with more power in his or her grasp was always moving, lecturing and posturing to the static and passive other, usually constrained in one of the two chairs.

The only major weakness in the production stemmed from some overpolishing in the first scene.

Harris obviously spent much time figuring out how to utilize pauses and glances, convey some subtext in dialogue, and point some moments in the original meeting — moments which will be the basis for Carol's accusations later.

Unfortunately, amid the rest of the rapid, difficult-to-follow dialogue which almost acts as filler, these highly-choreographed moments tended to stick out, set off red lights in the audience members' heads and thus decrease the surprise and shock which occur when Carol starts accusing her professor of harassment in the second act — a surprise which is essential if Mamet's intended polemic is to be established with the observer.

The audience around this reviewer was tittering and gasping during the first act, which suggests that entrapment of the poor professor was already suspected and being condemned.

Nevertheless, the production was a good one, and all associated with it are to be congratulated.

## Measures

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*Measures* stars Grant as Dr. Guy Luthan, an attending physician at a busy New York City hospital. When a naked and terrified homeless man arrives in his emergency room and promptly dies of a "complete metabolic meltdown," Luthan is intrigued.

When the man's corpse and medical records disappear before they can be studied, Luthan becomes downright obsessed with finding the truth about what happened.

His investigation brings him into contact with Dr. Lawrence Myrick (played by two-time Oscar winner Gene Hackman), a world-famous neurologist.

The viewer soon learns that Myrick is abducting homeless men to serve as subjects in his illicit spinal regeneration experiments. Luthan eventually catches on too, but not soon enough to prevent numerous attempts on his life and the destruction of his medical career at the hands of a nefarious *The Net*-like conspiracy.

Things slow down a bit when Luthan's sleuthing leads him under Grand Central Station in search of a secret homeless hideout known as "the room," but only momentarily.

The film soon builds to a thrilling conclusion as Luthan finds himself trapped in Myrick's research complex. Not only is there a really superb and tense cat-and-mouse game to enjoy, but the two leads finally get to share some significant screen time together.

Until the climax, Hackman really doesn't appear in the film very much. He has such a commanding presence, though, that he makes each of his scenes count. Hackman is one of those rare performers whose presence in recent years almost guarantees a quality film. This is a welcome change from the period that lasted from 1986-88 where he

seemed to be taking roles in every lousy film that he was offered (granted, *Hoosiers* and *Mississippi Burning* fell into this period, but they were the exceptions that proved the rule).

Since 1992's *Unforgiven*, though, Hackman has shown marvelous taste in choosing his material, and that streak continues with *Extreme Measures*.

The director of *Extreme Measures* is Michael Apted, an Englishman whose films I have always found to be relentlessly adequate but never exceptional. His biggest successes have tended to be films about women (*Coal Miner's Daughter*, *Gorillas in the Mist*, *Nell*), which is very ironic given the slightness of the female characters in *Measures*.

There are only two significant women in the film, and their characters' names are Judy and Jodie. No, they're not sisters either.

Judy is not especially noteworthy, but Jodie is a nurse played by Sarah Jessica Parker. She and Dr. Luthan flirt so much early on in the film that she definitely seems headed for the standard love relationship.

Strangely, though, not only does their relationship remain platonic, but Jodie also disappears for much of the film.

Perhaps this isn't really all that strange given the way the story unfolds, but I couldn't help but think that Jodie's low profile had something to do with the fact that Hugh Grant's longtime girlfriend Elizabeth Hurley served as the film's producer.

In an age of increasingly incoherent screenplays, this one, adapted from Michael Palmer's novel of the same name by Tony Gilroy (he also adapted *Delores Claiborne*) seems relatively well-crafted.

There are a few genuinely surprising twists in the second half, and there's even time left to indulge in a brief but thought-provoking medical ethics debate. *Extreme Measures* isn't always a pulse-pounding thriller, but it's never less than entertaining.

## Locklair

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almost passive musical sphere of nocturnal observation. Some in the audience seemed to think the vibraphone and bells that depict a refulgent moon were microphone feedback, but most of the audience felt fulfilled by this very accessible work. The pervasive metrical changes and staggered, echoed motives twisted any tendency for complacency into an interesting bit of artwork.

The third movement continued these features into a steady, lively sunrise in "Sunburst," which hinted at the musical morning of the second half of the concert.

What to make of the dual meaning of "hues" as a dimension of color and as a strident outcry? Perhaps the connotation as an imitative outburst reinforced Locklair's use of staggered motives.

Not to be outshone by the Locklair gala, several music faculty members also shared music with the audience impressively. Mozart's "Concerto No. 10 for Two Pianos," played by Louis Goldstein, a professor of music, and Peter Kairoff, an associate professor of music, was a splendid display of chamber music. The exuberant work complemented the friendly intercourse of these colleagues.

Delicately and sparingly applied rubato and meaningful crescendi were handed off with an integrated, mutual

feeling for the concerto. The subtle differences in performance style did not detract at all from the duet, as often happens when two top-notch performers collaborate.

The second half of the program commenced with chamber music of a different sort. Leo Brouwer's gem entitled "Retrats Catalans" was an intimate discussion in the first movement, an enrapturing sight in the second. Instructor of music, Patricia Dixon's role as solo guitarist seemed more moderator and equal than leader of the musical gestures of the piece.

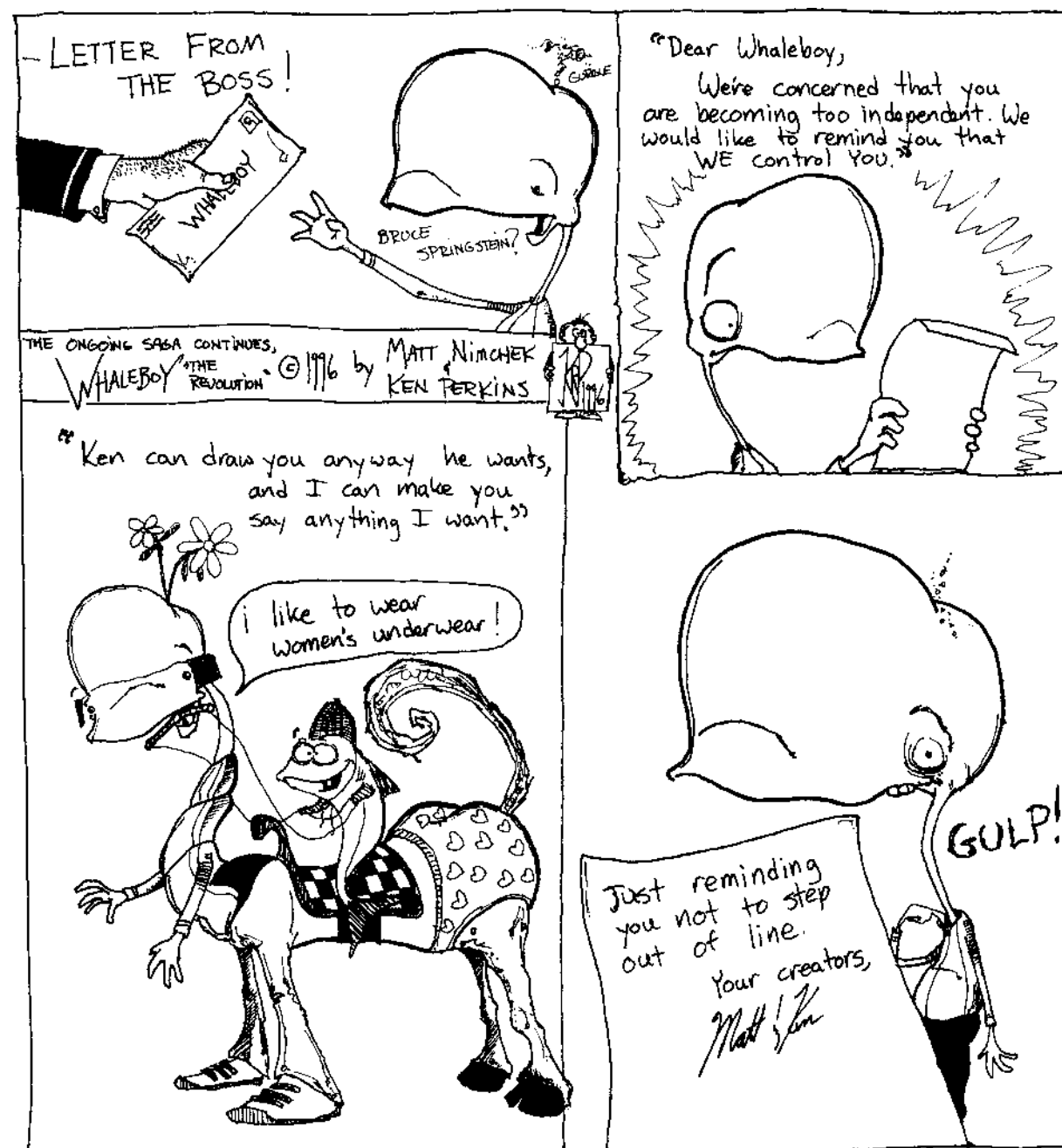
The strings and woodwinds often presented and answered folk motives, which Dixon in a way clarified at different moments. Her sensitive style reinforced her place in the work.

The second movement, a tribute to the architect of the Barcelona cathedral, contains more stylistic direction. Partly as a function of its rhythmical complexity and primacy, it carried the audience to a Spanish setting rather than reflecting on poetic possibility as in the first movement.

The success of the evening underscored the best about contemporary art: It can be dramatically sophisticated, yet fully accessible to today's audience.

For most of the audience, sitting and listening intently to three hours of music was a complete feast for the mind; leaving was bearable only because of the artistic possibilities that could be cultivated in personal, social and political ways. The final chord was only the end of the beginning of the year. In an age of what Perret calls the "diminishing attention span," such an evening is a timely reminder of the timelessness of artistic pursuit. Will the arts ever die? Saturday's answer was a resounding "no!"

**The subtle differences between the two pianists' performance styles did not detract at all from the duet.**



## Non Sequitur by Wiley



## CALENDAR

To have your event listed, send mail to P.O. Box 7569, e-mail arts@ogb.wfu.edu or fax us at 759-4561.

### ON CAMPUS

#### Exhibits

**William Hogarth Prints and Color Function Painting.** Two concurrent exhibits. Hogarth was an 18th-century painter who satirized England. "Color Function Painting" displays artwork of three pioneers of optical art.  
**When:** Now through Oct. 25.  
**Where:** Gallery, Scales Fine Arts Center.  
**Cost and info:** Free. Ext. 5585.

#### Movies

**The Rock.** 1996. Sean Connery is a former Alcatraz inmate trying to save the lives of 81 tourists held hostage on the island. Nicholas Cage also stars.  
**When:** 7 p.m., 10 p.m. Fri. and Sat; 7 p.m. Sun.  
**Where:** Pugh Auditorium.  
**Cost:** \$2.

#### Music

**Secret Artists Series.** The Klezmer Conservatory Band will perform.  
**When:** 8 p.m. Sat.  
**Where:** Wait Chapel  
**Info:** 759-5788

**Choral Music of Dan Locklair.** The Bel Cantal Company will open its season with the premiere of Holy Canticles, by Dan Locklair, a professor of music and the composer in residence.  
**When:** 8 p.m. Oct. 18  
**Where:** Brendle Recital Hall  
**Info:** 373-2974.

#### Theatre

**The Crucible.** Arthur Miller's controversial play about the Salem witch trials.  
**When:** 8 p.m. Friday, Sat. and Wed.  
**Where:** Main Stage  
**Cost:** \$3 for students

#### ELSEWHERE

#### Clubs

**This Week's Spotlight: The Aware Festival.** Ziggy's will play host to several bands including Stir and Slackjaw.  
**When:** Fri.  
**Where:** Ziggy's  
**Info:** 748-1064

**Cat's Cradle. Today:** Thomas Chapin Trio. Fri.: The Specials with Skinner Box. \$12. Sat.: Jump Li'l Children. \$5. Mon.: New Kingdom, Red Aunts and The Veldt. \$6. Wed.: Junior Brown. \$13.  
**Where:** 300 E. Main St., Carrboro.  
**Info:** (919) 967-9053.

**Lizard and Snake Cafe. Sat:** AIDS Awareness Benefit with Clarissa and Richard Alwyn. Wed.: Jad Fair with Doe.  
**Where:** 110 N. Columbia St., Chapel Hill.  
**Info:** (919) 929-2828.

**Ziggy's. Today:** Purple School Bus. Fri.: Aware Festival. Sat.: Cravin Melon. Wed.: Hazel Virtue.  
**Where:** 433 Baity Street.  
**Info:** 748-1064.

#### Exhibits

**A Thousand Years of Czech Culture.** The

collection of over 200 historic artifacts and works of art capture the politics, religion, and folk customs of the Czech Republic.  
**When:** Through March 16, 1997  
**Where:** The Gallery at Old Salem  
**Info:** 721-7300

#### Festivals

**Fiesta '96.** The Hispanic League of the Piedmont is sponsoring the annual street celebration.  
**When:** 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Sat.  
**Where:** Corpening Plaza, Liberty Street.  
**Cost and info:** Free. 519-4020.

#### Theatre

**Cyrano de Bergerac.** A heroic comedy based loosely on the life of a historical figure of 17th century France. Part of the North Carolina Shakespeare Festival.  
**When:** 8 p.m. Fri.  
**Where:** High Point Theatre, 220 E. Commerce Ave., High Point  
**Cost and info:** \$13 for students. 887-3001

**Twelfth Night.** A Shakespeare comedy of love, plotting and mistaken identities. Part of the North Carolina Shakespeare Festival.  
**When:** 8 p.m. today  
**Where:** High Point Theatre, 220 E. Commerce Ave., High Point.  
**Cost and info:** \$13 for students. 887-3001.

**Lost in Yonkers.** Neil Simon's Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award winning play about a summer of growing up in Yonkers returns to Winston-Salem.  
**When:** 8 p.m. Thurs. and Friday; 2 p.m. Sat.  
**Where:** The Little Theatre, 610 Coliseum Drive.  
**Cost and info:** \$9 for students. 725-4001.

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