



Harold Baker talks about the hard life of working in a steel mill in "Working," the first play of the season in Robinson Theatre.

Robinson production of 'Working' realistically portrays American jobs

Andrew Mayer
Freelance Reporter

Working is about the good and bad times we all experience on the job. Director Joseph Gilg opened the University Robinson Theatre's fall season on Nov. 3 with a musical adaptation of Stud Terkel's *Working*.

The premise of the book is no matter what area, level of expertise or amount of influence a person has to work with, work remains an integral part of all our lives. And without work, life loses its meaning.

The audience appreciated the show, as they were ready and waiting to applaud between each musical and narrated scene. Opening-night jitters may have been the cause of four occasions when actors misscued lines. Even so, this is a really enjoyable play.

As the full house watched the Brecht-influenced performance open, the on-stage three-piece band played the Police's "S.O.S." "Brecht conventions include showing backstage activity to shock the audience into receiving a more ritualistic experience.

Although the application of these conventions in Gilg's interpretation was not to the extreme of Bavarian playwright Bertolt Brecht's original work, Gilg nonetheless created an entertaining evening.

The set, designed by scenic designer Jerry Williams, was a genuine hodgepodge. The workplace was an atmosphere of barriers, directional and informational road signs, iron works and a factory time clock located

THEATER REVIEW

Working

Robinson Theatre
Written by: Studs Terkel
Playing until Nov. 18

★★★★

in the center of the stage.

Williams, who teaches scene design and is known for his free-minded instruction, created a worker's atmosphere that allowed the actors to move freely as they sang and danced in their surroundings.

The scene changes flowed easily from one to another. The initial adjustments after the beginning of each scene were pleasing and the lighting changes moved smoothly, thanks to lighting designer Janet Rose.

The costumes and music were somewhat period to the 1970s but were toned down enough so the audience did not suffer culture shock. Nice job Anna Lawrence, Jim Greenwood and Eric Friedman.

The play, a mix of 16 musical and narrated numbers, was choreographed by Stephen J. Chatfield. Chatfield developed numbers that were representations of workers doing their jobs.

Sometimes the dancers would move in a tight, strict manner while doing their jobs, and sometimes they made fun dances out of whatever physical movements they had to do when performing their jobs.

In particular, Hillary Beth Heinz and Megan Smith, who

play a grocery store checkout worker and a factory worker, each elegantly and brutally portrayed their character's daily body use in the differently staged work environments.

The cast ranges from an 11-year-old to a nearly 65-year-old, and the casting of the sexes and races represents an accurate reflection of Eugene's work force.

Arvin V. Entena plays the part of a Latino character. Entena was particularly remarkable in the number "Un Mejor Dia Vendra."

Kelsey Tyler and Siouxsie Suarez sang their number, Brother Trucker. "Roll, roll, roll brother trucker. Roll, roll, roll mutha fucka." The two were wonderful and substantially supported the relatively inexperienced cast.

Other cast members include Harold Baker, Luke Freeborn, John Klinghammer — who also plays guitar in *Working* — Rebecca Foster, Rachel Aanstad, Stan Boyd, Sparky Roberts and Ed X. Schiessl.

This play addresses the American workplace in all its environments, with all its tradition.

I recommend *Working* to people who have at one time or another felt as if the highs or lows of their careers were exclusive to them.

Working continues Nov. 9-11 and Nov. 17-18. A special benefit matinee for the Homeless Action Coalition will be Sunday, Nov. 12. For tickets and information, call the University Theatre box office at 346-4191.



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