



The cast of "Lips Together, Teeth Apart" successfully creates an Independence Day atmosphere.

Play has strong acting, technical merit

By Andrew Mayer
Freelance Reporter

The Robinson Theatre's production of *Lips Together, Teeth Apart* is a well-acted rendition of Terrence McNally's famous play, which deals with the stigma surrounding people who have AIDS.

This play is centered around tense characters whose stress-inducing problems range from first-stage cancer to homophobia. It explores people's fear and ignorance regarding AIDS.

A statement made by Sally, played by Janet Gupton, exposes the heart of the play:

"We all think we will get AIDS in this pool," she says. McNally wrote this line to point out the myths surrounding AIDS and HIV.

The play receives its name from a scene that takes place between Sam, played by Richard Leebrick, and his dentist.

The dentist orders Sam to repeat the line "lips together,



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teeth apart" several times before bed to avoid grinding his teeth in his sleep.

Jack Watson, the play's director, creates a tepid comedy from McNally's play. In one scene, Trisha Will puts on a prat fall act while she tends to the barbecue, and it was hilarious.

It did, however, undermine Will's following scene in which she soberly relates the playwright's vision of reality. This scene is meant to be serious, but the audience snickered.

Despite this, the acting is convincing and well-done.

The Cape Cod scene, designed by Jung-Hyo Kim, a Korean graduate student, is a pseudo-suburban lake condominium set. The mask-like main wall of the set is designed to allow for three patio exits onto a multi-leveled deck.

The deck descends to the half-thrusted stage, on which a section of swimming pool is located.

A working cedar shower further enhances the set.

The costumes by Sue Surdam and the lighting by Alan McEwen both support the summer setting and help with each character's exposition and subtextual nuances.

Specifically, simulated fire works, soliloquized sunspot lighting and a stars-and-stripes bikini top embed the Fourth of July in the minds of audience members.

The sound, by M. Chandler Melvin, includes music from Ella Fitzgerald and The Beach Boys.

These selections are reminiscent of a time when a person could go outside in the summer and feel at ease with nature without 30-block sunscreen, chemicals in the water and a polyurethane suit of armor.

I recommend seeing *Lips Together, Teeth Apart*. The show has strong technical merit and experienced acting.

It will be performed May 30-31 and June 1, 7 and 8 at 8 p.m., and Sunday June 7 as a benefit for HIV Alliance & The Names Quilt Project. For more information, call 346-4191.

Cabaret provides disagreeable experience

By Andrew Mayer
Freelance Reporter

"Eugene's premiere theater company": That is what the Actor's Cabaret of Eugene calls itself. Ha! I went to the mediocre production of Tennessee Williams' classic *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, and I was not able to relax enough in the theater to focus adequately on the performance.

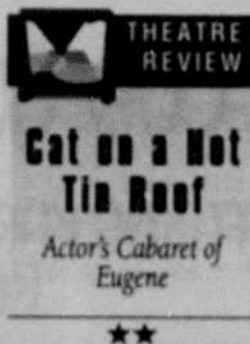
Opening night tickets are \$15 dollars, and regular evenings are \$11 - too much. The ticket allows an audience member to be seated in a 100-person or less venue, in which the second-hand seats are attached to each other. This attachment causes every person watching the show to share each other's discomfort, as one squirmer causes a chain reaction.

The squirming may be a result of the intense heat in the building or the buses that constantly run behind the audience.

Or, because of the physical drama in this play, an audience member in the front row, which is inches away from the action, may be scared of being struck by a flailing crutch.

The play's recycled monochromatic set is supposed to be a southern motif, but the Cabaret's design is actually a Midwest motif. A rectangular plaid sofa is the centerpiece, and it is comparable to furniture belonging on the set of *Wayne's World*, not on a rich southern plantation.

Corey Woods played Brick. Whether through



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on one half of her body. This was magnified by the slanted gathering material on the front of her dress that made her appear to literally have a chip on her shoulder.

The lights, by Steven Rakestraw, were designed well and help bring the piece together.

I assume that the director may have tried to geographically adjust this play to fit a northwest audience.

If that is the case, it is dangerous to try adjusting such an American mainstay as *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.

The play continues in the ACE Annex through June 15. I tentatively recommend seeing it from an upper row.

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TEETH APART

by Terrence McNally

for HIV Alliance

June 2, 1996

UO Robinson Theater

Students: \$5 General: \$10

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