

'Lion' Proves Exceptional Play

By Keith Kelley

(The *Lion in Winter*, directed by Dr. Jack Hensley, runs tonight and tomorrow night in the Rose Theatre, Language Arts Building. Curtain time is eight o'clock).

James Goldman's "The Lion in Winter" is an exceptional play. "Lion" is exceptional in that its strength is its weakness. The dialogue is brilliantly written: insights into the workings of the individual character's minds are afforded through subtle, yet explicit language. Humor is paramount, yet beneath the superficial level Goldman has etched dramatic, at times tragic, characters. The contemporaneity of the language makes the play as good as it is, and at the same time restricts it from being a better play. "Lion's" nowness of language makes it playable, but not lasting, theatre.

Like the royal family in question college theatre's production of "The Lion in Winter" has its "ups and downs." Jac Slivka's set is outstanding. The jack-knife staging facilitates rapid scene changes, thereby displaying various locations within the castle. The unique texture of the walls enhances the medieval atmosphere. A false proscenium establishes the historical setting and focuses one's attention on the actors by making the set appear confining. The furniture, designed by Slivka, embellishes the set. A heavier, richer material, connoting regality, could have been used for the curtains.

AKPsi To Host 7 Up Executive

William Hebron, assistant advertising manager of the 7 Up Company, will be the guest speaker at a professional program sponsored by Alpha Kappa Psi business fraternity. The program will be held in Kent Library in

Karen Fenelon's lighting is functional and effective. The lighting specials highlight, pardon the pun, the dialogue transpiring. Particularly effective is the overhead lighting on Geoffrey and John, thus drawing attention to them during Henry's "I have no sons" speech.

A note of recognition is due Cindy King, stage manager, and the stage crew for their efficiency in rotating the scenery and placing the set pieces in a minimal amount of time.

One would have hoped that more originality would have been utilized in the selection of pre-curtain and scene change music. Granted, the movie sound track of "The Lion in Winter" is excellent, but one could employ other music as fitting, thereby minimizing the comparisons one would make between a movie done by professionals and a college production performed by amateurs. "Carmina Burana," a contemporary piece of music which has its origin in songs written on monastery walls in the Middle Ages, would have been superb in conveying the ribald air of "The Lion in Winter."

Ups and Downs

The acting exhibits more "ups and downs" than do the technical aspects of the production. Suzanne Nenninger's Eleanor of Aquitaine is reminiscent of Katherine Hepburn's Eleanor, toothy smile and all. When Miss Nenninger divests herself of Hepburn's Eleanor and speaks to us as she sees the queen some fine acting is evidenced in the theatre.

Charles Dockins captures the humor in Goldman's Henry, but lacks the emotional intensity, the lion. Mannerisms add polish to a characterization if they are appropriate for that character, and, if selectivity is exercised in deciding upon the appropriate mannerisms. Dockins' mannerisms for Henry are ineffective, because

we have seen them in his earlier performances this year.

The royal offsprings are played by Trigg Sanders, Steve Mays, and Greg Dehm. Sanders gives his best performance in a major production as Richard Lionheart. His Richard is a well thought-out one. Sanders delivers his laugh lines tactfully, preserving the humor within the lines while subordinating it to the complexities, homosexuality, Oedipal fixation, love-hate of Henry, of Richard's character.

Characterization

Steve Mays displays an excellent sense of timing in his portrayal of John, the youngest, and Henry's favorite son. Punching, underplaying, telescoping lines, and maintaining concentration throughout the play make May's performance an example of good craftsmanship in acting. John is a bumbler, both mentally and physically. Mays, in an attempt to convey this awkwardness, at times overdid John's walk.

Dehm's performance as Geoffrey lacks depth. Dehm plays Geoffrey as one who wallows in self-pity. Geoffrey is not such a character; he has gone beyond self-indulgence to hate of others, and, perhaps to self-loathing. Inasmuch, Dehm's Geoff is deficient in the "wheels and gears" aspect.

The remaining cast members are Ben Jordan and Bette Sztukowski. Jordan portrays Philip, King of France, adequately. He has a tendency to swallow his words. However, this habit should be remedied with more experience on the stage. Goldman has written an Alais who is gentle, loving, repulsed by political byplay. Miss Sztukowski's Alais is more of a nag than a lover to Henry.

A superior set, technically sound characterizations, and witty dialogue earmark college theatre's fourth offering of the season as an assured enjoyable evening at the theatre.