"Lark" features effective acting, direction

Effective facial expressions and meaningful gestures reinforced the actors' lines in Friday's performance of "The Lark", the Theatre Department's first play of the semester.

The play, a Lillian Helman translation of the French play "L'Alouete" by Jean Anouilh, is a contemporary version of the story of Joan of Arc, French heroine and military leader.

Definitely 20th century in its approach, the play emphasizes the majesty of the uncrushable human spirit in Joan's solemn vow: "What I am, I will not denounce. What I have done, I will not deny."

The action begins with Joan's trial, and then traces the highlights of her life which led to her sainthood.

Rather than ending with Joan's tragic death, the play concludes with one of Joan's happiest moments—the crowning of Charles as King of France.

Anne Shapland's portrayal of Joan, "a lark in the skies of France," is especially spirited and convincing.

Jim Kleckner, as Warwick, often speaking directly to the audience, lends cohesion to the separate incidents of the play.

Kleckner carries his difficult role expertly, as does Bob Dodd in his characterization of Chaucon.

Greatly contributing to the play's effectiveness is an austere set design by Nancy Paule, a senior theater arts major from Belleville.

The simple, stone-like blocks which make up the set represent everything from a courtroom to a meadow to a king's chambers.

Costume designer John Keough and crew deserve special praise for their authentic creations, and Marti Fagan's lighting design merits mention for its role in making the set come alive.

The music, employed subtly, triumphantly highlights the play's several peaks of emotional intensity.

"The Lark", first performed in Paris on October 14, 1953, is not intended to be a traditional history play.

Though the basic story of Joan of Arc is enacted, Jean Anouilh "makes no effort to explain the mystery of Joan".

The author uses the play as a means of expressing his own ideas.

"The Lark", directed by Gerald Sullivan, will be presented at 8 p.m. Feb. 22nd and 23rd, and at 2 p.m. Feb. 24th.

Reservations may be arranged by calling the theater arts office at 581-3110 between 1 and 5 p.m.