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DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE.....

Harold Pinter's internationally celebrated play, "The Birthday Party", described as an enigmatic "comedy of terrors," has been scheduled for a series of performances at the Eastern Illinois University Theatre April 18,19,25,26, and 27.

The action of the play takes place in a shabby boarding house at the seashore resort, run by a pair of old excentrics, Meg and her husband Petey. For a long time they have had only one boarder, an unkempt young man named Stanley, who is neurotically fearful of going outdoors and talks often of how he might have become a success as a concert pianist -- if "they" had not frustrated him.

To this frowzy dump there suddenly come two new lodgers named Goldberg and McCann. They insist on staging a birthday party for Stanley, though he keeps protesting that it isn't his birthday at all. No matter, they will celebrate his birthday just the same, with Meg, Petey and a neighborhood tart named Lulu, as the other guests.

Through birthday jests and toasts and a grotesque game of blindman's buff, Stanley grows constantly more panicked by the closing-in tactics of Goldberg and McCann. They give him a present of a child's drum, which he beats maniacally, until he is deprived of it and it is broken. He is browbeaten by a series of third-degree, rapid-fire questions, and charged with having "betrayed the organization."

Before they are through with him, Goldberg and McCann reduce Stanley to a speechless zombie, robbed of whatever sould he had, and he compliantly walks with them to their big black limousine in which they say they will take him to "Monty" --

(more)

dressed and brushed respectably at last. Perhaps he is too well dressed and brushed, looking as if the suave thugs had prepared him for his own funeral.

Robert Bacon will play the terrorized Stanley in this combination of humorous absurdity and breath-taking nightmare. Bob Dodd and Dan Dailey will portray his glib, smooth persecutors, Goldberg and McCann, Karen Eubanks and John Malkovich the dishevelled landlady and her husband, and Jayne Ball as the girl who drops in on the birthday party.

E.G. Gabbard is the director taking responsibility for the electricity of the play's action, and C.P. Blanchette is designing its setting of a grubby boarding-house.