



Ruby's Cabaret presents "Ooh La La, La Cabaret"

Conceived by Mary Kelley Leer and Anita Ruth Choreography by Myron Johnson with additional staging by Meggan McGrath Bormes Musical Direction by Vance Holmes Costumes by Lyle Jackson and Joanne Moyer Lighting Design by Michael Murnane Sets by Laura Hohanshelt and Michael Pittman Sound Design by Ezra Gold Production Assistant - Sharon Fenn

> Performers Dara Ceaser Michael Matthew Ferrell Zhauna Franks Vance Holmes

Orchestra John Boblett, trombone Joan Griffith, bass Vance Holmes, piano Arlene Samsel accordian and saxophone Larry Sims, trumpet Bruce Wintervold, percussion David Wright, saxophone



CABARET FOR KIDS FROM ONE TO NINETY TWO 400 THIRD AVENUE NORTH + MINNEADOLIS WAREHOUSE DISTRICT + 333 1006



Giselle

Concept/Choreography - Myron Johnson Set Design - Jim Tepfer Lighting Design - Michael Murnane Costume Design - Lyle Jackson Sound Design - Mike Gansmoe, Daron Walker

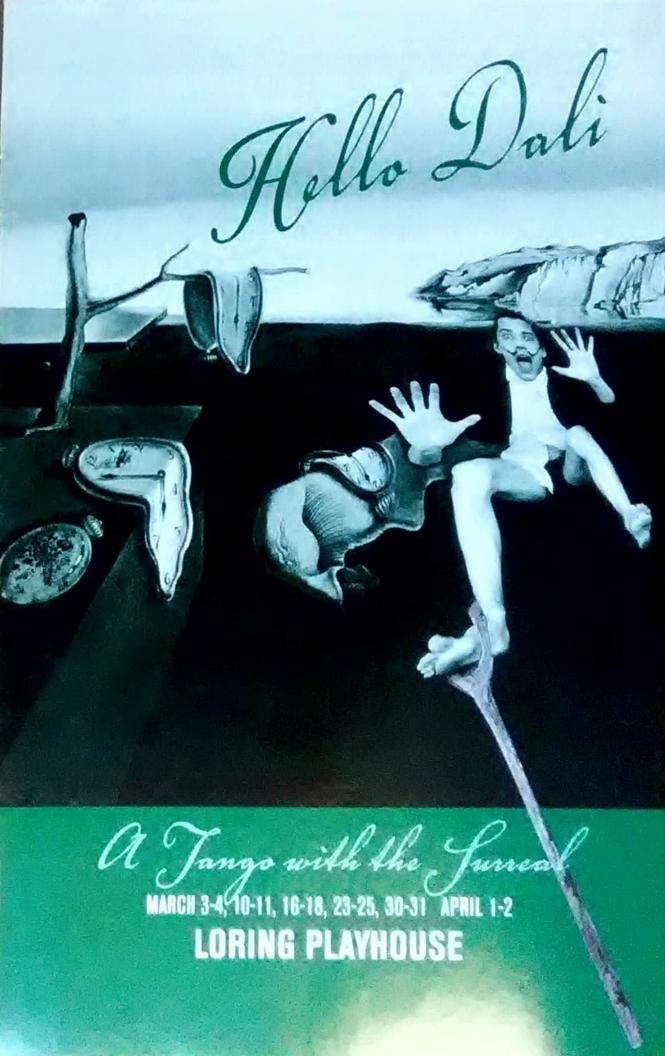
Cast

Giselle Hilarion Albrecht Mother Person Myrta Town Girls/Wilies Julie Tehven Vance Holmes Robert Skafte Colleen Tague Heather Cadigan Zhauna Franks Jennifer Hart Alyce Finwall Stephanie Fellner Stephanie Karr Valerie Torres Tina Anderson

Production

Stage Manager - Brad Dahl Set Construction - Brad Dahl, Steve Schoemmacher, Jonathan Monto, John Monto Costume Construction - Colleen Tague Hair and Makeup - Zhauna Franks Scenic Painting - Doreen Mangan, Jim Tepfer Sound Board Operator - Brad Dahl Light Board Operator - Tracey DeBenedictus





THE RITZ THEATER

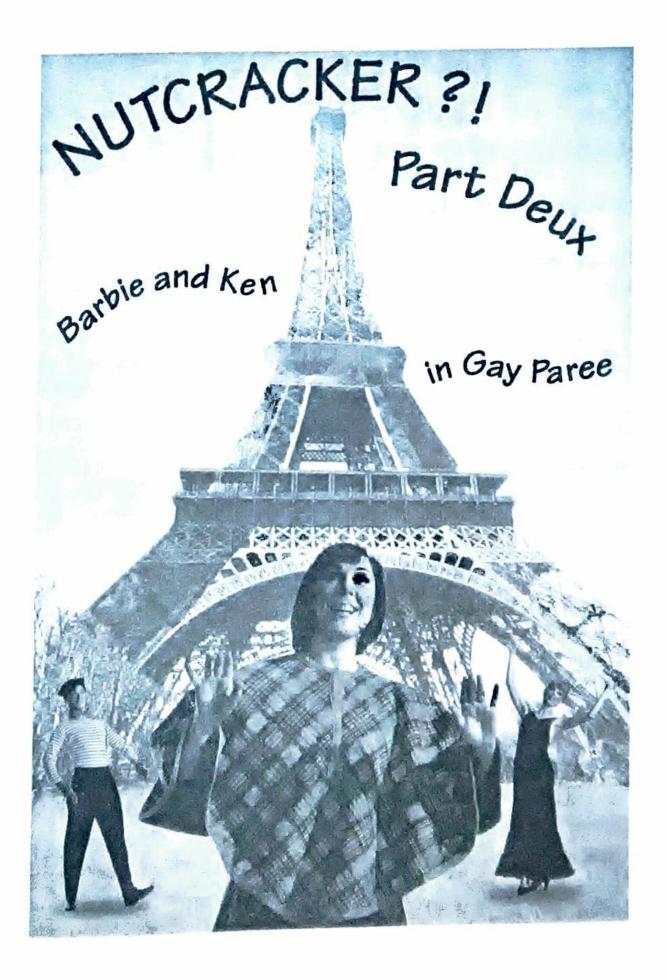
MAY 6TH-24TH 2009

A MUBICAL BY CHAN POLING What's love without a little chemistry?

/



....the sequel

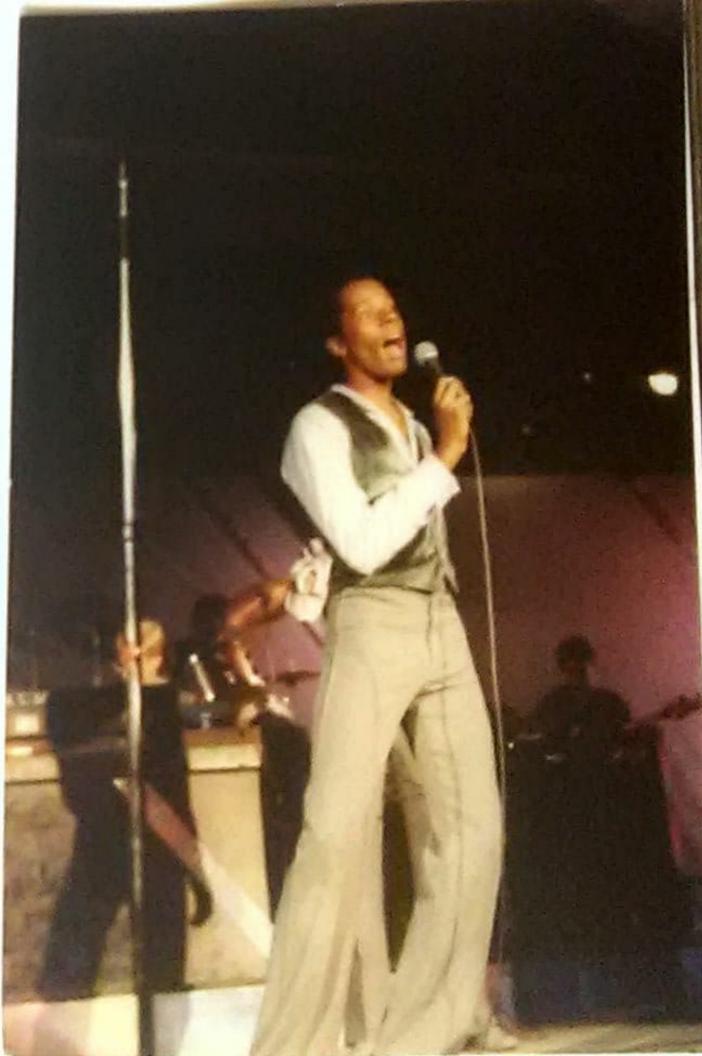




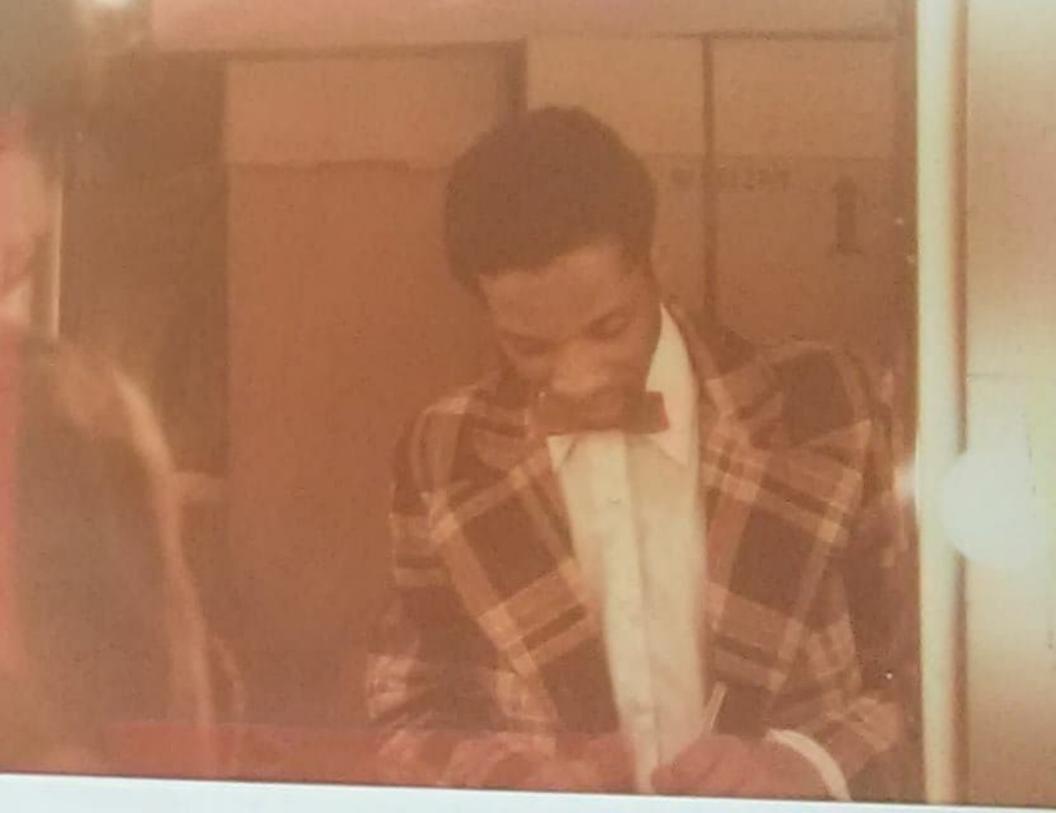


NUTCRACKER?! 2001 (not so) SUITE



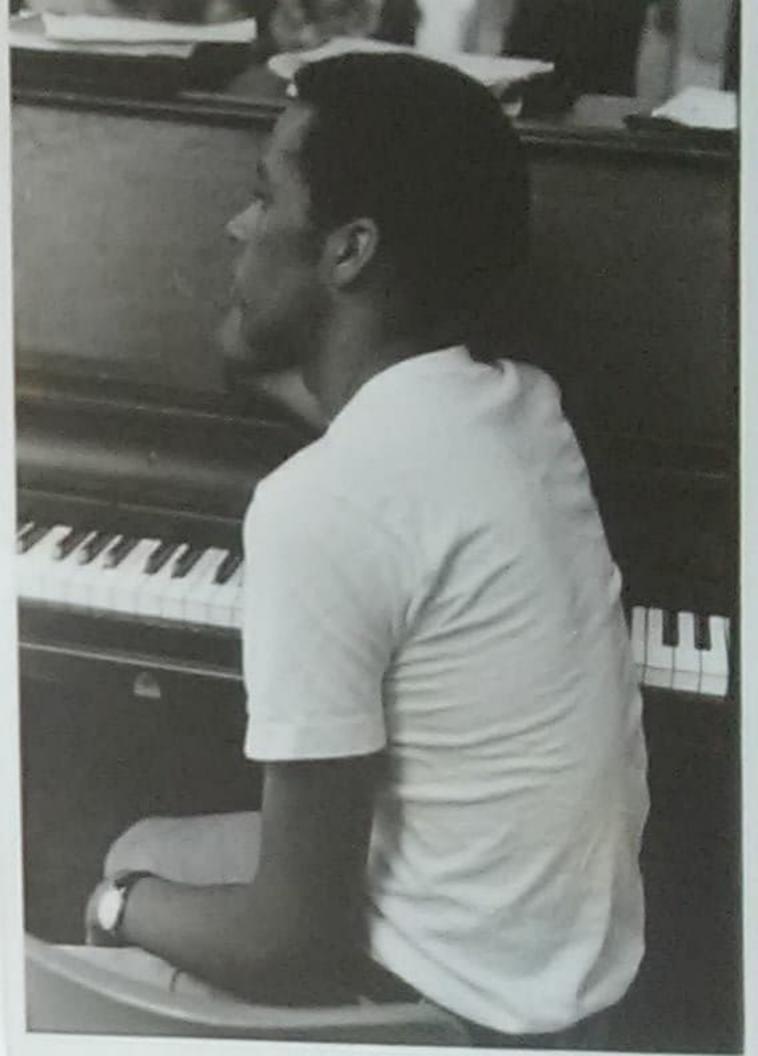


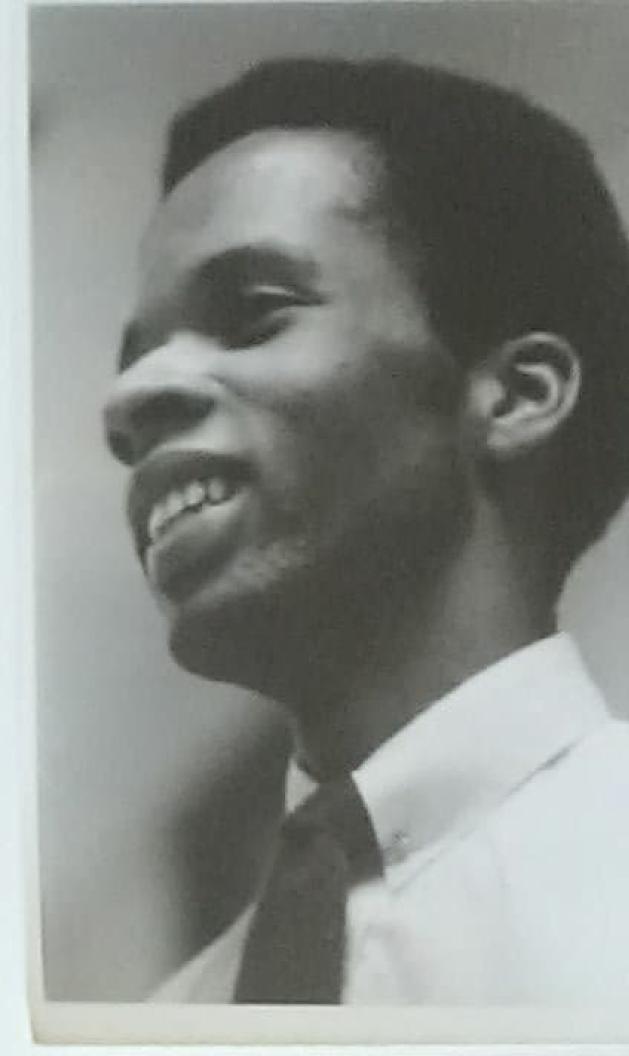






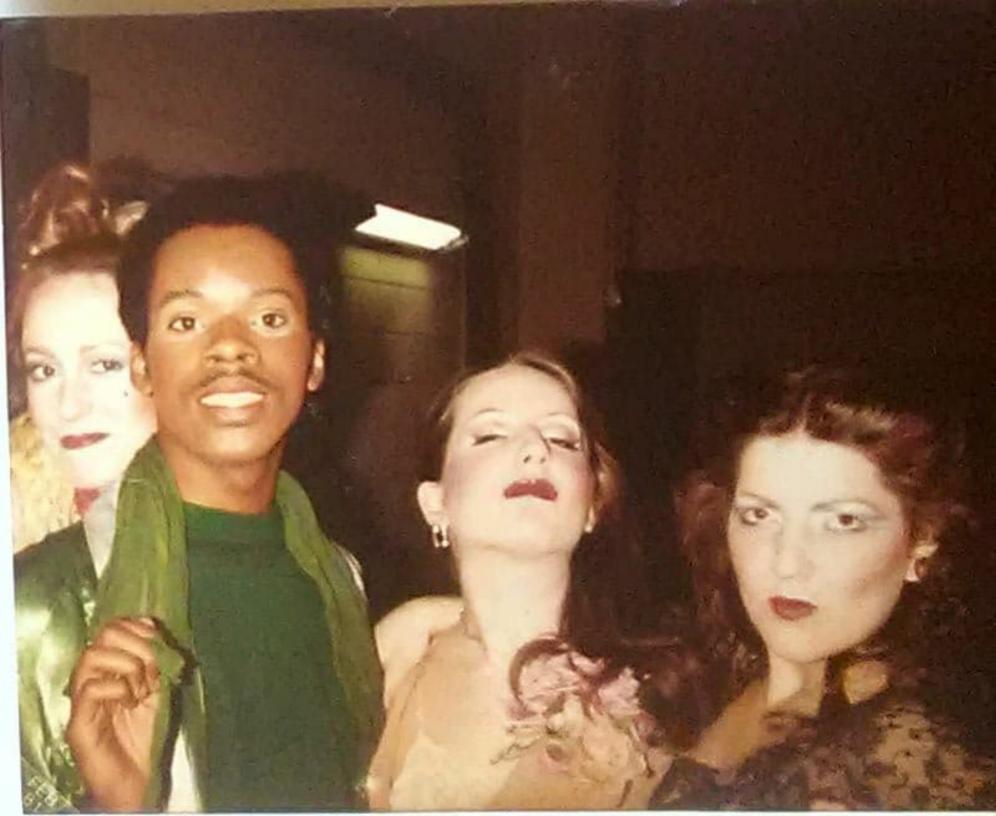


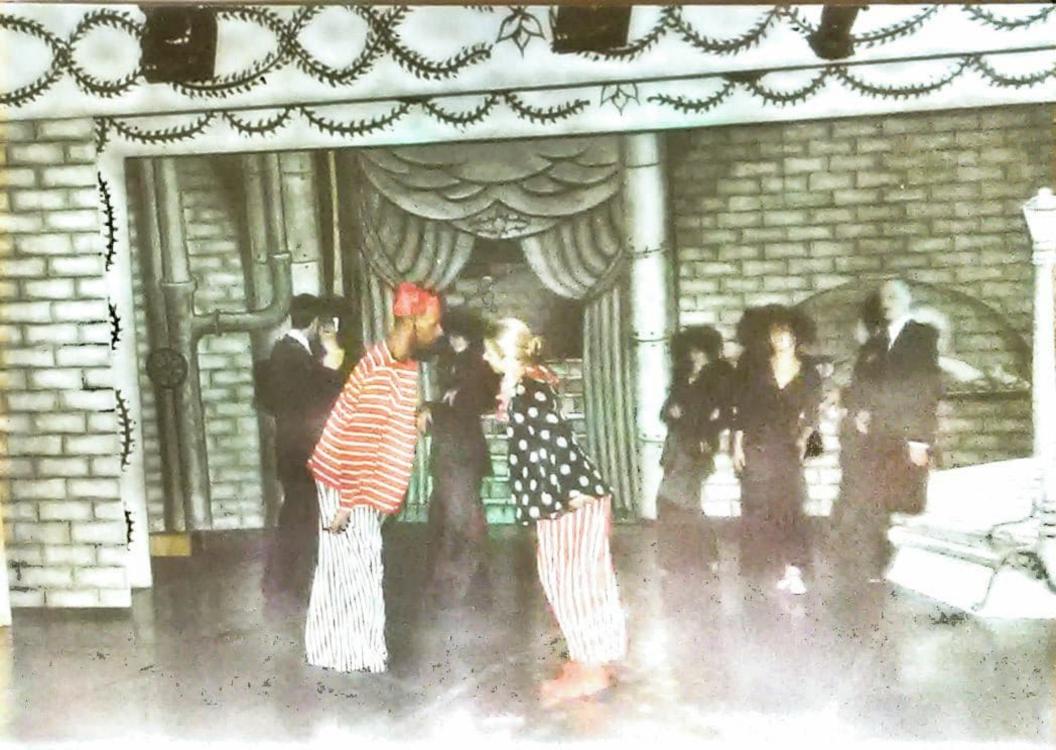










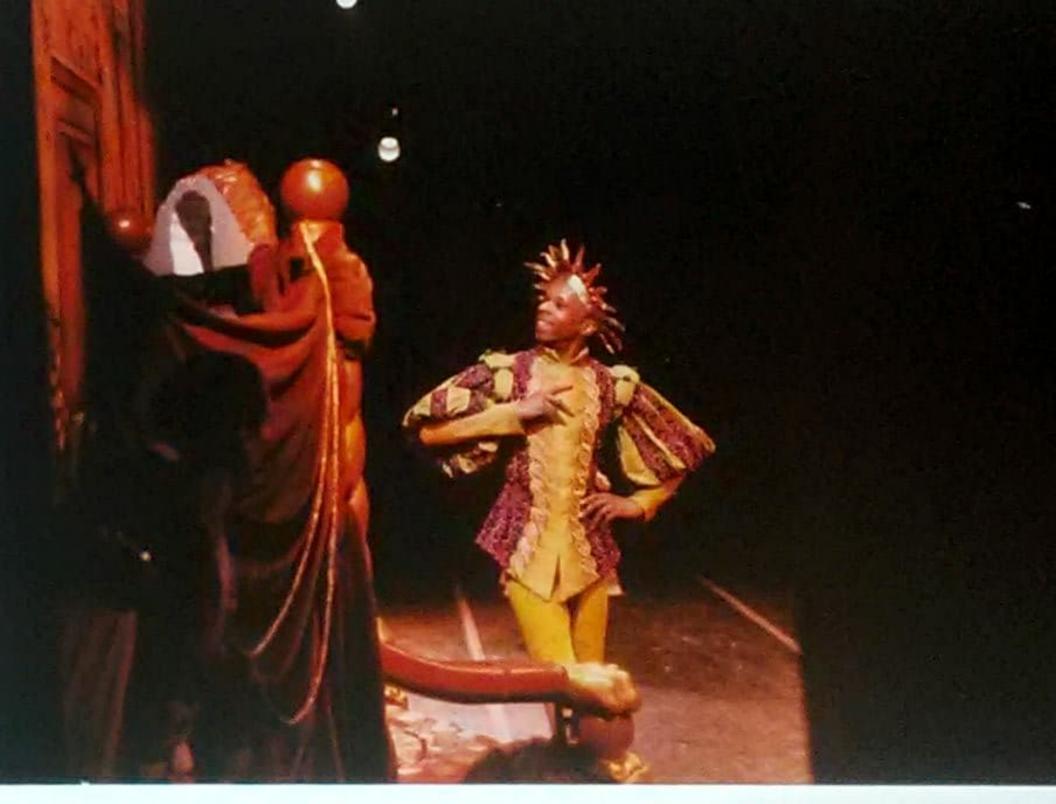






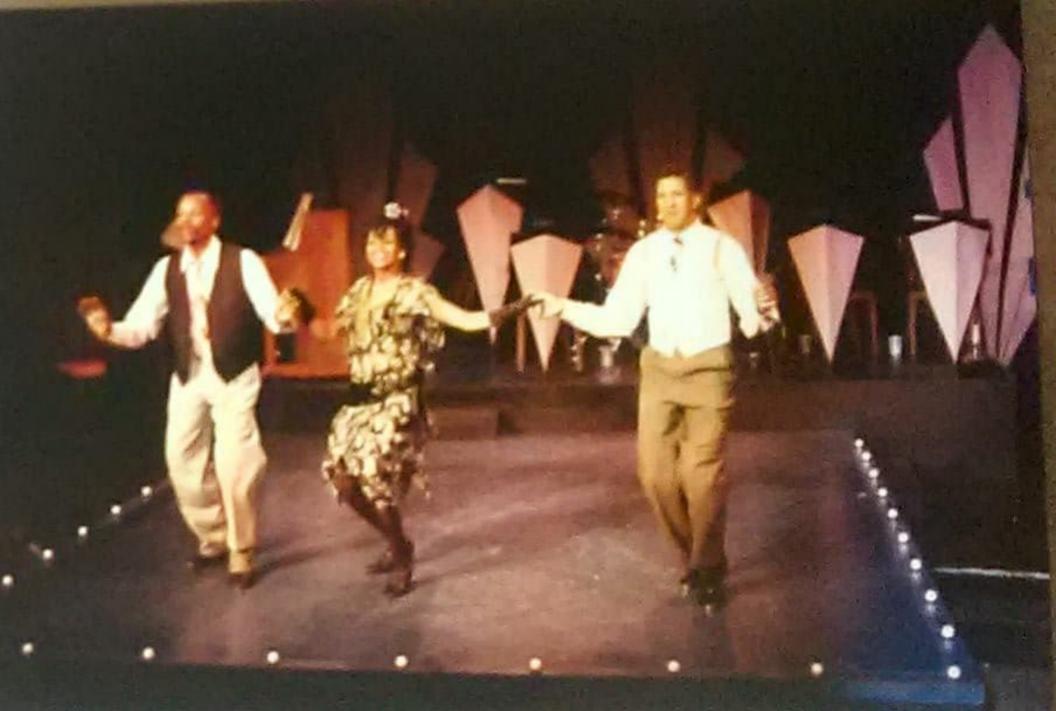














YW Theater Co. To Organize

An organizational meeting of the new YWCA Theater Company has been scheduled tomorrow at 6 p.m. in the YW on Ninth Ave.

The program is open to young men and women of the community in eighth through tweifth grades. The organizers, Vance Holmes and Scott Metzler, will outline plans for the company at the meeting.



8 The Daily News, McKeesport, Pa., Mon., Oct. 30, 1973

Culture Night Listed at YW

"An Evening of Culture" on Thurs

A feature of An Evening of Cultur on Thursday from 7 to 10 p.m. in th YWCA will be a production of " Thurber Carnival" by the pe YWCA Theatre Company.

Seen above are members of t

Y.W.C.A.Presents'The Prodigal'

The recently-formed Young Women's Christian Association Theatre Company will present its fifth production, "The Prodigal," at 1 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 15, and Thursday, Aug. 16 at the Y.W.C.A., 410 Ninth Ave.

This musical comedy for the whole family is based on the parable of the prodigal son. The music was written by Donald F. Marsh, and the book is by Vance Holmes.

As the play opens, Ben, the prodigal son, takes his share of the family money and sets out for a distant land ... Dravosburg ... where he squanders it in reckless living. There's a funeral scene, a disco segment, and, of course, the rejoicing scene when Ben is reunited with his family. Some of the songs are: "Woops! My Pocketbooks Empty," "Let Me Be A Servant," "N'Ya, N'Ya, Johnny's Jealous," and "Lost and Found."

Featured in the cast of eight are Terry Macko, in the title role, Leonard Robinson as his father, Mr. Jackson, Ron D'Amico as Johnny, and Nancy Hart is Quenelope the disco queen.

No member of the cast or crew is over 18, and Vance Holmes who also serves as director/choreographer is 16.

Completing the cast are Scott Metzler. Kathy Rotharmel and Missy Fransko.

The crew includes Scott Safier, Dan Love, Dave Eilart and Doug Fransko. Artistic director is Dave Melton, and graphics are being handled by John Snooks.

Culture Night Listed at YW

Shirk Plantan

"An Evening of Culture" on Thursday from 7 to 10 p.m. in the YWCA on Ninth Ave. will feature a theatrical production of "A Thurber Carnival" and an art show including paintings by adult art students.

The event will be open to the public without charge and refreshments will be served by members of the art class and theatre company following the show which will begin at 8:15 p.m.

Arrangements were made by Mrs. Walter Tolin, YWCA art instructor; Mrs. Frank Fedas and Miss Addie Glaub, cochairmen of the program committee; and YW staff members.

Adult art students of Mrs. Tolin whose paintings will be exhibited are Jo Austin, Norbert Fey, Kathy Morris, Amber Minyon, Eva Vareha, Mary J. Markos, Alice A. Kulasa, Jessie Betters, Clara Fox, Fran Dorinsky, Christina Johnson. Gertrude Bruce, Barbara Aranos, Fay Poling and Anna Marie Washowich.

Scott Metzler and Vance Holmes are the leaders of the YWCA Theatre Company which was organized this fall. They will produce and direct the play. The cast includes Brad Lichtenstein, Dan Mendlowitz, Dave Eilart, Mary Putman, Barbara Banks, Cindy Knapp and Lori Lydon. A feature of An Evening of Culture on Thursday from 7 to 10 p.m. in the YWCA will be a production of "A Thurber Carnival" by the new YWCA Theatre Company.

Seen above are members of the cast in rehearsal. Seated in front are Brad Lichtenstein, left, and Barbara Banks. Back of them are, left to right, Dan Love, Cynthia Knapp and Scott Metzler.

¹⁸ The Daily News, McKeesport, Pa., Tues., Feb. 27, 1979 'Y'Theatre Readies Second Play



SCOTT METZLER

BY KAREN MILLER Woman's Page Editor

Scott Metzler doesn't help Vance Holmes direct and choreograph, and Vance doesn't help Scott build sets or make money.

That may be one reason for the smooth operation of the area's newest theater organization, the McKeesport YWCA Theatre Company.

Scott and Vance, both juniors at McKeesport Area Senior High School, head the group of 20 eighth through 12th graders, who presently are preparing their second production, a musical comedy/vaudeville offering called "Dracula Baby".

It will be staged April 26 and 27 during YWCA week, in part in tribute to the McKeesport Young Women's Christian Association which provides facilities for the company.

"We had no place to do plays, so we thought of the 'Y' because it had a stage, and the 'Y' said okay," Vance explains. Both he and Scott add that the "Y" has "bent over backwards to help us."

The group's first play was "A Thurber Carnival', for which the cast "scrounged a lot of props".

It played two nights and raised enough

capital to permit purchase of a limited number of costumes and props for "Dracula Baby".

That part of the company's operation is Scott's province. He says he likes acting but is more interested in "the backstage stuff".

He had stage crew duties in McKeesport Area Senior High School's Forensic Club production, "The Invisible Dragon", while Vance was on stage in a leading role.

Vance also is a veteran of McKeesport Little Theater Juniors shows and has participated in the Instant City Circus, a theater program affiliated with Carnegle Mellon University. About the latter, he says, "I learned a lot from that. It got me interested in directing."

Right now, the new company is looking for members, especially male members—actors, singers and dancers. Rehearsals are held three nights a week and, in addition to practice for the upcoming play, include theater games, improvisation and concentration exercises.

"Dracula Baby" will debut as a "dinner" show April 26; the dinner part will be spaghetti at the YWCA.

Future productions will be in the comedy and light drama vein, the company leaders say. Further information may be obtained at the "Y".





he Daily News, McKeesport, Pa., Sat., Apr. 21, 1979

-Daily News Photo

Activities at the McKeesport YWCA, 410 Ninth Ave., during the coming week will be centered on the observance of National YWCA Week.

Featured will be a membership drive and telethon, open house, a meeting of the new Singles Group on Tuesday evening and presentations of "Dracula Baby" by the YWCA Theater Group at 7:30 p.m. Thursday and following a spaghetti dinner at 6:30 p.m. Friday.

Talking over last minute arrangements above are, left to right, Mrs. Lester Botkin, president of the YWCA board of directors, holding one of the signs prepared for the observance; Vance Holmes, director and choreographer of the theater group; Julie Jackson and Mrs. Jacob Schroeder, membership committee co-chairmen; and Brad Lichtenstein, an actor with the theater group.

Y.W.C.A. Theatre Company Performs Musical Spoof

The recently-formed Young Women's Christian Association Theatre Company will present its second production, "Dracula, Baby," at 7:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday at the Y.W.C.A., 410 Ninth Ave.

The musical comedy spoof, loosely based on the classic take by Bram Stoker, was written by Bruce Ronald, with lyrics by John Jakes and original music by Vance Holmes, a McKeesport Area Senior High School student.

As the play opens, the infamous Count Dracula is setting out for England to make the beautiful young Lucy his 99th bride.

He becomes involved with an odd assortment of inmates and staff from a local sanatorium, including a loon, who eats spiders, and nurse, who spits nails.

Arthur, Lucy's "proper" fiance and Van Helsing, a bumbling professor, attempt to thwart the conniving Count.

Some of the songs are: "Transylvania After Dark," "Spiders," "Fly With Me," "The Garlic Rag" and "Wedding Rite." for which Holmes wrote both music and lyrics.

Featured in the cast of 16 will be Scott Metzler, in the title role, Brad Lichenstein, as Renfield the Kook, Valette Majors, as the Nurse, and David Eilert, as Van Helsing.

No member of the cast or crew is over 18 years old. Composer Vance Holmes, who also serves as director and musical director and choreographer, is 16.

The Y.W.C.A. Theatre Company was formed by Holmes, Scott Metzler and a few friends to give young people a chance to become involved in theatrical productions.

"We want young people to do theatre - not just sit around and watch other people doing it," says Holmes.

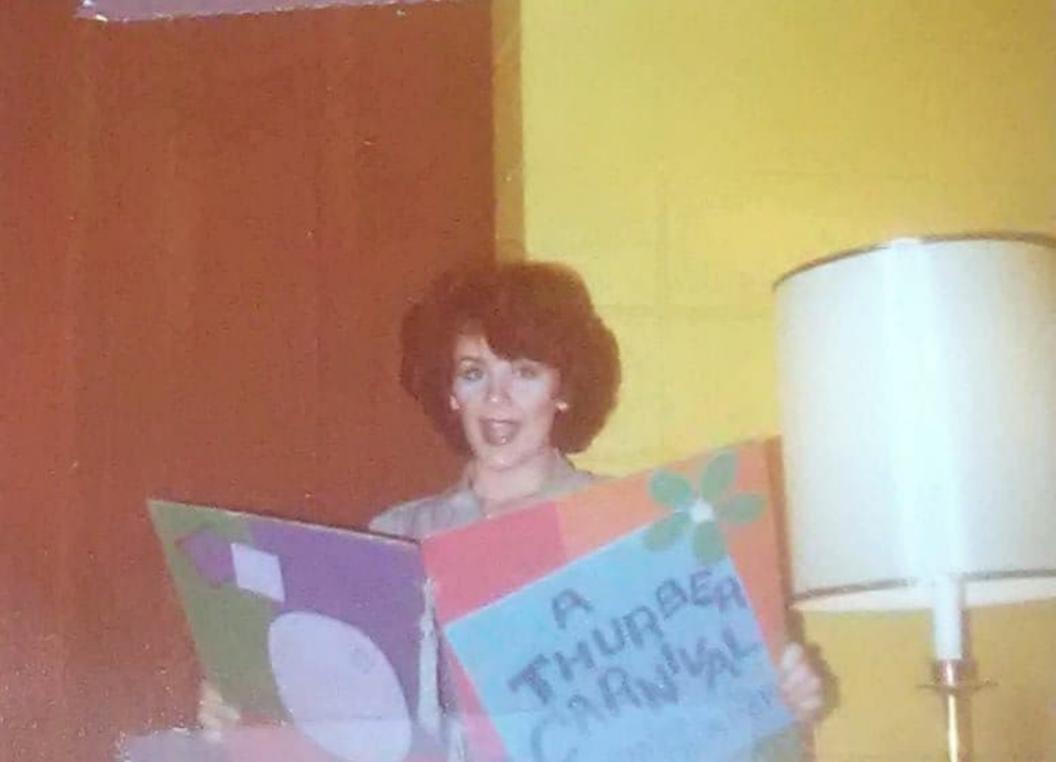
The group performs at and is supported by the Y.W.C.A. of McKeesport.

A spaghetti dinner at 6:30 p.m. will precede the Friday evening performance.



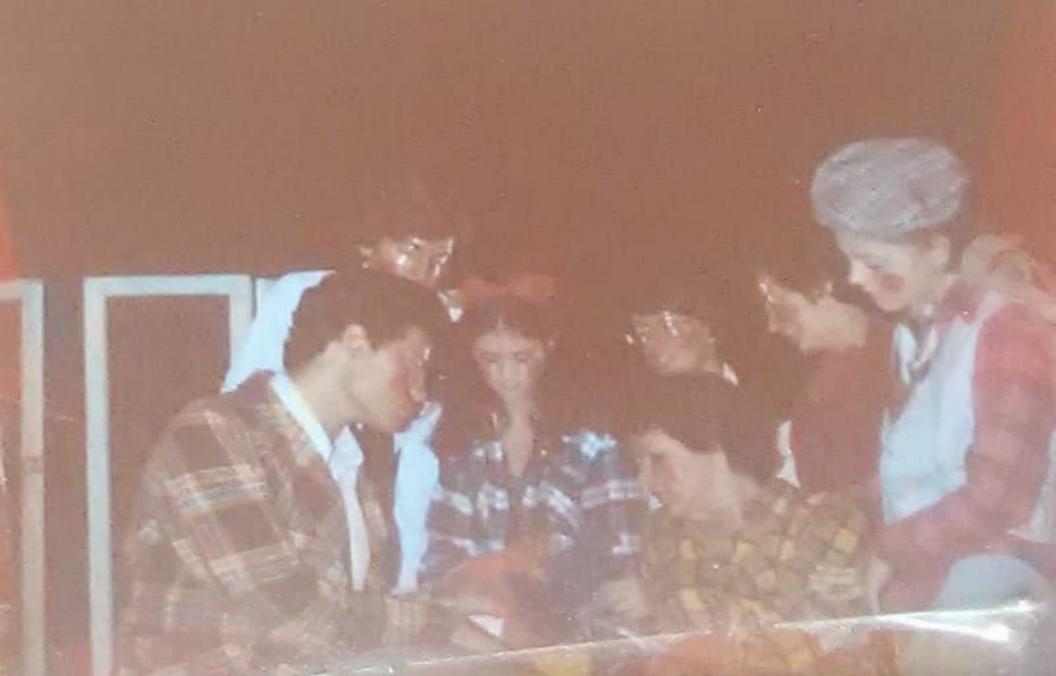












The Daily News, McKeesport, Pa., Thursday, July 1, 1976 MLT Juniors Revue Happiness Pursuit

By DAVID SALLINGER Daily News Staff Writer

"In the Pursuit of Happiness," or more properly, in an effort to share happiness with an audience, the McKeesport Little Theater Juniors open tonight with a bicentennial revue that features a mixture of songs, dances and skits.

It seems somehow appropriate that the Juniors are performing on the eve of our country's third century; as it is the beginning of a new era in our history, so it is for the Juniors the beginnings of many theatrical careers. The group ranges in age from 13 to 18, and under the direction of Phyllis Braveman. scripted, choreographed and arranged music for the production.

A two-hour survey of American sights and sounds from the inseption of the country during the Revolution to present day, the music traces the progression and growing sophistication of the new land.

"This Land Is Your Land" ets the audience know the scope of the survey, moving nto the legacy of the Founding Fathers with a musical version of the "Preamble" to the Conctitution, Original music with he choral rendition of the work was written by Clay Zambo.

The music looks in on the livil War, the Westward novement, the Gay Nineties, he Jazz Era, the Depression, Vorld Wars I and II, the Fifies and Sixties, and finishing p about 200 years from where t began

Choreography by Joel Salih, Gerry Dalton and Kathy Lewis is prominent throughout the how Making use of the full imensions of the stage, whether a simple march or an intricate square dance, the Juniors expend energy to give movement to the music. And the dances show remarkable variation, from an almost slithering segment by Joel Salih as the tempter in "It Ain't Necessarily So," to a can-can complete with garters, to the Charleston, the jitterbug, tango and tap dancing in "King of the Road" and "All For the Best."

But the outstanding quality of the revue is the vocal ability of the Juniors. In company as a chorus, the harmony and volume of "Battle Hymn" and "Oklahoma!" fill the room, setting the stage for individual performances of note.

Vance Holmes. in a rendition of "Momma Look Sharp," from "1776." dominates the solos with a powerful voice and presence. Bob Causer also stands out as a talented singer, featured in "Puff the Magic Dragon." Monica Bieniosek offers a western dialect in "You Can't Get a Man With a Gun." and Bobbi Moses performs a sultry "Can't Help Lovin' That Man" and "Bring in the Clowns."

Able harmony and sound mark the appearance of two groups. Vance Holmes, Russ Shively, Bob Causer and Clay Zambo blend as a barbershop quartet, and Monica Bieniosek. Sally Toperzer and Diane Wagner hit the mark with their characterization of the Andrews Sisters.

A sprinkling of skits takes the audience through examples of entertainment and historical events that parellel the music of the times. Political sature even creeps in. In a scene where George Washington Carver discovers the peanut, who is his assistant" Junuty Carter It was only dress rehearsal, but the cast gave the impression they were having a good time: it's something hard 'to hide. The only thing missing was the applause, which will come after the two shows, tonight and tomorrow at 8 p.m.

Members of the band include Marcie Gilmore, Bruce Weissert, David Nagy, Tim Bertoty and Eric Johnson and Russ Shively, who was also music director.

Props were handled by David Seibert, David Bodnar and Carla Campbell. Sets were designed by Mary Traeger and Kathy Lewis, who, with Arlene Chiz, designed the costumes.

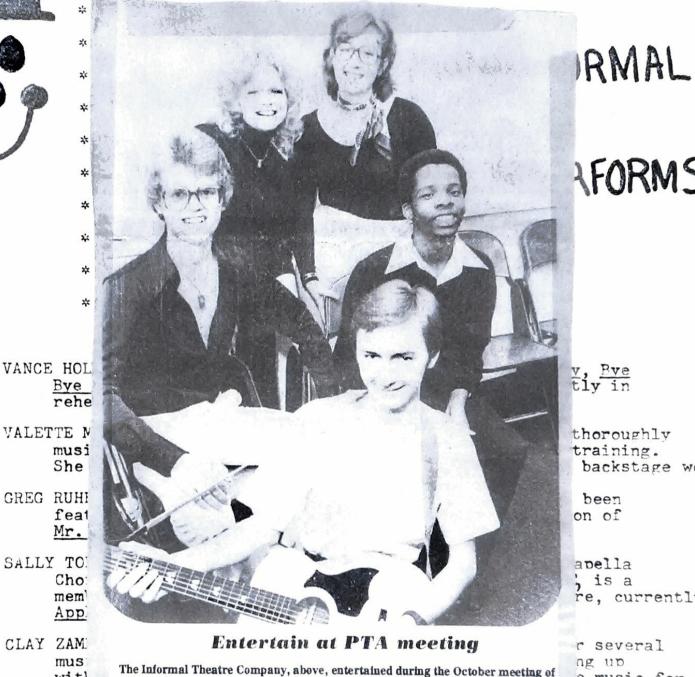
Other members of the cast included: Michael Joy, Michael Anselmo, Victor Barreiro. Diane Jacob, Linda Urkervich and Clark Louden.

Stage managers were Ann Traeger and Gladys Myers. Lights by Chuck Dougherty. Makeup by Gail Odorcich. Writers included Greg Buke and Lamont Arnold.

THE INFORMAL THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS ...



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r several ng up e music for

wit! Stewartsville PTA. In the back row are Valette Majors, left, and Sally Toperzer. Inf (Center, Gregory Ruhe, left, and Vance Holmes. Front, Clay Zambo. Valette is a junior at Serra High School. Sally is a senior at McKeesport High where Vance is a NOTE FROM sophomore. Gregory is a junior at Norwin and Clay is a senior at McKeesport. able with-(Standard-Observer photo) s program out appere are invited. Should you be interested in seeing the group again. call 673-6954.

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Flagstaff Hill in wed. Hill He Oug 24, Park Oug 24, Basen Schenley Performed 63 pm. Instant City Cincus Apprentice Troupe His Former is sparsored by the city of PHTSDANNI APProx in of PANS AD Lit Than's OPEL SCIENCE PRALET. ACCINE CALIFORNI I. MAD.

Festival of

FOBJES/G



The Beast Things in Life, on stage five times a day at Kennywood Park, presents these "monsters" who are more likable than scary: (back row, l. to r.) Marc Shulman, Robert MacNeill, Kathleen Arent; (front) Chris Isacco and Vance Holmes. The show continues through Labor Day.

Al and I made our fourth trip to Kennywood this year — a record of sorts to see a young singer-actor friend, Marc Shulman, in a show he is doing out there, Monster Mash (The Beast Things in Life).

I must contess that what we expected was entertainment for kids that wasn't going to require much polish or abundance of talent. Would the young audience know the difference? What we viewed was not only a completely polished, highly talented cast but a skillfully produced musical with singing and dancing to please the older, more discerning viewer.

Marc had the pivotal role of Dracula who got the action moving. With his white face and bloody lips he was a menacing, capeswinging, pratfalling character dressed in classic Dracula attire but who sometimes changed into a sequined dinner jacket. His singing revealed professionalism, something we took for granted, but the acting ability was a surprise.

Kathleen Areni played the role of Dracula's Bride; tall, sexy even in fright makeup, she and her "husband" made a funny, likeable couple. Chris Isacco played The Mummy, a part that took considerable talent and stamina. Anyone who can project so much energy in 90-degree temperature while wrapped in yards of bandage has to enjoy acting. She was the most exhuberant mummy you have ever witnessed.

Frankenstein, as played by Robert MacNeill, was another example of apparent professionalism both in acting and singing. A native of Georgia, his role with RMT Production, producers of the musical, extends beyond this one play. Vance Holmes as the Werewolf was a real audience-pleaser. This disco-dancing, furry faced creature in his white John Travolta suit and hat was fun from start to finish and a darn good dancer to boot.

The monster spoof was produced by Raz-Mataz Productions (RMT), which has been packaging live entertainment in Kennywood's Garden Theatre since 1979. Writer and director is Martha Eddins; choreographer is Lynn Fleetwood.

Raz-Mataz performers also provide entertainment throughout the day. Twice informally as roving musicians and four times on stage. There is a Dixieland show, a Twentieth Century show, *Sing, Sing, Sing; the Big Band Show*, featuring music of the 30s and 40s, and finishing with the *Red*, *White and Blue Revue* at 10 p.m.

RMT Productions is comprised of four Georgians: the group's president Rocky Ball, David Anders, Rick Burgess and Lee King. They are joined by entertainers Charlie Neal of Georgia, Robbie MacNeill who serves as manager of the monster show, Eric Riebling of North Hills, Tom Butler of McKeesport, Rebecca Poland of Irwin, Sandra Clark of Duquesne, and Valette Majors of White Oak.

The production company was organized to bring live entertainment to family amusement parks. They are responsible for all of the writing, arranging, choreography, costuming and music that is involved. For several years continued on page 8



MAHS Students Ready 'Hello, Dolly'

McKeesport Area High School will present the musical "Hello, Dolly" April 23 through 26 at 8 p.m. at the high school auditorium.

Production staff for the musical, about the meddling of a matchmaker in Yonkers and New York City, includes Robert Luketic, Jane Vranish, Ruth Schmidt and Kevin Wilson.

Appearing in the musical will be (some of the roles are double-cast): Kim Nedd and Chris Isacco as Dolly Gallagher Levi; Sue Balint and Cindy Valenta as Ernestina; Ron D'Amico as Ambrose Kemper; Kim Shawl and Kim Stasko as the horse; Vance Holmes and Mark Dowd as Horace Vandergelder; Sue Brzek as Ermengarde; Bill Orris and Vance Holmes as Cornelius Hackl; Bob Castro and Cino Futo as Possible Tucker; Therese Benedek and Iris Nelson as Irene Molloy; Tammy Craven and Kim Morselli as Minnie Fay; Kim Simeral as Mrs. Rose; Chris Hitchens as Rudolph; Scott Gobbel as the judge and Frank Hijek as the court clerk

Waiters will be Mike Anselmo, Kendal Brown, Carl Englert, Clarence Ford, Mike Garrity, Joe Harris, Curtis Henry, Frank Hijek, Chris Hitchens Yugo Ikach, Rick Jackson, Mike Kuremsky, Mark Larson, Jeff Ludwick Jeff Vortolomei and Chuck Williams Dancers will be Laura Gazdick, Nancy Jasiewicz, Holly Kuhs, Lauren Rodgers Tina Shash, Kim Shawl, Kim Staske and Sandy Solomon.

Musical accompaniment will be by



Two sets of leading players are set to begin this week's run of the musical "Hello, Dolly" at McKeesport Area Senior High School. Kim Nedd and Christine Isacco, seated left and right, share the role of Dolly, the meddling matchmaker, on alternate performance nights. The same with Vance Holmes, left, and Mark Dowd, right, who will split the run as Horace Vander-Daily News Photo

gelder. Danae Troianos, concert mistress, center, will prepare the high school orchestra for the evenings' music.

"Hello, Dolly" runs tomorrow through Saturday at 8 p.m. in the high school auditorium. Senior citizens may reserve free tickets for tomorrow's performance by contacting the high school."

High School Choral Concert Tomorrow

McKeesport Area High School Choral Music Department will present a concert in celebration of "Music in Our Schools Week" tomorrow at 8 p.m. in the auditorium.

The evening's program will be divided into three parts.

In Part 1, the A Capella Choir will sing the "Hallelujah Chorus," " I Believe" (with trumpet solo by Karen Polak), "Children of the Heavenly Father" (with a duet by William Orris and Scott Gobbel), "In Jesus' Name" (with a flute solo by Karen Smith), "Send Down the Rain" (with a solo by Betsy Price) and "Battle Hymn of the Republic (with a solo by Gino Ruta). Kim Shawl and Karen Myers will be accompaniests.

Part 2 will feature a special segment arranged, taught and directed by Vance Holmes. The segment, titled "America Sings," will include 60 years of American musical selections. Vance, a senior member of the choir, has been a member of the Honors Choir, District Choir, Regional Choir and State Choir, He plans to continue his education at West Virginia University.

Final part of the concert will feature a brief preview of the upcoming school production of "Hello Dolly." Ruth Schmidt will conduct the choir during this performance.

Three members of the A Capella Choir have been named to perform with the Regional Choir at Highlands High School Thursday through Saturday. They are Mark Dowd, William Orris and Vance Holmes. Admission will be charged at the door; senior citizens will be admitted free.



Rehearsing

-Daily News Photo

Getting into character are members of the McKeesport Area High School Speech Club whose play, "The Golden Grotto," runs Friday and Saturday, as well as Feb. 15 and 16 at the high school auditorium.

Showtimes are Fridays at 7:30 p.m. and Saturdays at 2:30 p.m.

Cast members in costume shown above are, standing left to right, Vance Holmes as The Great Zauberfinger and Mark Dowd as King Ludwig. In the bottom row are Ronald D'Amico as Prince Bracko, and double cast as Princess Blanda, Nila Antonella, left, and Diane Shaffer.

Others in the cast are Maura Weinstein as Gretta; Kim Bock as Etta; Barb Dansak as Hetta; Joyce Palm or Sue Balint as Nurse Woephful; Scott Metzler or Scott Safier as Siegfried Wagner, the Dragon, and Bill Wojton who is double cast as Prince Bracko.



For the Kids -Daily News Photo by Elmer C. Brewer, Staff Photographer

The McKeesport Area Senior High School Speech Club will present its annual children's play, this year entitled "The Invisible Dragon," Friday and Saturday and on Feb. 9 and 10 at the school auditorium.

Curtain is scheduled at 7:30 p.m. for the two Friday performances and at 2:30 p.m. for the Saturday shows. Separate admission prices are being offered for children and adults, and tickets may be purchased at the door at the auditorium.

Five of the major cast members are shown above. Standing, from left to right, are Vance Holmes, Clay Zambo and Sandy Ruscin. Seated is Sheila Markowitz, with Scott Metzler to the right.

MCKEESPORT HIGH SCHOOL MUSIC DEPARTMENT

presents

MARCH MELODIES

in celebration of

MUSIC IN OUR SCHOOLS WEEK

March 11, 1980

A CAPPELLA CHOIR Ruth Schmidt, Director

Hallelujah Chorus...... Handel I Believe - Ave Maria.....arr. Beard and Tucker Karen Polak - Trumpet

Children of the Heavenly Father..... Swedish Folk Song Scott Gobbel and Bill Orris - duet

Climbin' Up The Mountain arr. Smith

In Jesus Name arr. Wilson Mixed Ensemble - Karen Smith - flute

Send Down The Rain Eilers Betsy Price - solo

Battle Hymn of the Republic arr. Ringwaid Gino Ruta - solo

Kim Shawl and Karen Myers - Accompanists

INTERMISSION

AMERICA SING - 60 years of music arranged, taught and directed by Vance Holmes.

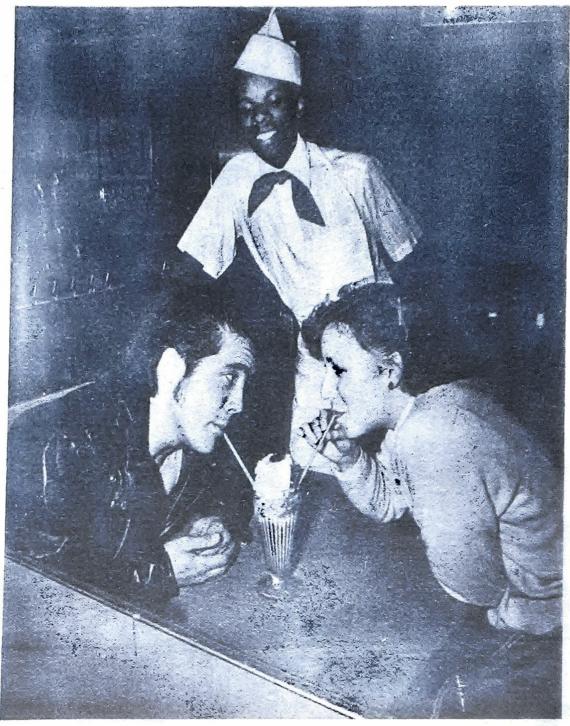
Vance, a senior member of A Cappella Choir has won many honors this year in choir as well as in competition for speech. He has been a member of Honors Choir, District Choir, Region Choir and State Choir. He plans to continue his education at West Virginia University majoring in Communications.

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

Hello Dolly Jerry Herman

" a brief preview "

The play will be presented April 23 through April 26 at the High School



Photos by Ron Rittenhouse

Dan J. Krupp, Jennifer Youngdahl share soda as Vance Holmes looks on

Grease From bobby socks to cha-cha, pedal pushers to cruisin', WVU musical romps through '50s

Only pros showed up for 'Amateur Night'

By KAREN KAFTON

Talent is alive and well at WVU. The University should be proud of the wealth and quality of talent displayed by University students at the first "Amateur Night," held April 18 in the Lair ballrooms.

Sponsored by the Student Foundation, the talent show consisted of 21 solo and group acts, including comedians, singers, pianists, guitarists and even a magician.

Of course, like most "amateur hours," the show had its bad acts, but most were exceptional. Some of the material performed, especially in the music department, was original.

Drawing wild applause from the audience and capturing the first place award was Vance Holmes. He sang "Mama, Why Don't You Come Home?" with a versatile and entertaining style. Holmes then wowed the audience with a technically difficult tap dance, executing it with ease.

Taking second place was Cindy Charles, Jolene Scmitz and Ginny Walls. These girls recreated the '40s by impersonating the Andrew Sisters singing "Don't Sit' Under The Apple Tree" and "Sentimental Journey." The girls used good harmony and were exciting to watch.

The Bobbing Ninnies, the second of the only two dance acts in the show, won the third place award. This group consisted of four girls and a band comprised of a banjo, a fiddle, a guitar and a string bass. The girls performed an interesting and exhausting dance, clogging.

Three acts tied for fourth place, guitarist Vince Herman, pianist Ginger Brookover and magician John Kuehn. Herman was a relief from the overload of guitarists with his humorous songs. Brookover performed her original piece in a dramatic, expressive manner and magician Kuehn awed the audience with his mystique. He shredded a Daily Athenacum to pieces before the audience's eyes and fused it together as if he had never shredded it.

Entertaining acts deserve mention: comedian David Sadd and Abbott and Costello's "Who's on First Base?" routine exceptionally performed by Mark Daugherty and Jeremiah Kohler.

First, second and third prizes and \$100. \$50 \$25. were The participants respectively. were given a maximum of five points in eight categories which perincluded professional formance, confidence and audience response. Among the five judges were former Athenaeum editor, Eugene Cottilli, and Student Body President, Kim Ferris.

The participants were chosen from preliminary auditions held earlier in the semester.

As a source of fun entertainment, "Amateur Night" is sure to become an annual event.

'Greasepaint' gets season off to good start

By J. T. ELLENBERGER Entertainment Writer

Opening night of the revival of The Roar of the Greasepaint, The Smell of the Crowd was a good show. Enjoyable, entertaining and fun, the action did not disappoint the audience, who definitely got what they paid for.

The performance's focus was the interplay between Sir and Cocky, played by Keith Butler and Tommy Nichols. Both actors did outstanding work in their portrayals of have and have-not, keeping the show moving along and in line with the intent of the authors.

One of the highlights of their performance was a duet, "Where Would I Be Without You," a vaudevillean rave-up satirizing the unbalanced interdependence of rich and poor.

The music in general was quite good, aside from a few strained voices here and there and a bum note or two. The combo, directed by David Satterfield provided excellent backing for the troupe, not overpowering the performers, but not invisible. Technically speaking, the lighting, costumes and stage design were also well done and contributed greatly to the production.

Notice should be given to one outstanding performance, that of Vance Holmes, who played the part of The Black, and was not in the summer production of the play. A newcomer to the Division of Theater, Mr. Holmes has an excellent future ahead of him, which will no doubt be furthered by his fine voice.

If there was a flaw in the production, it was not in the performance, but in the play itself. The leading motif of the play was the playing out of the game of life, where the rules are changed by the rich while the poor attempt to play. This holds up well until the end of the play when things are reconciled very neatly by Cocky's insistance that everyone should go to find another game to play, and forget the present gameboard, which has caused so much misery and dissention. It would seem that this is just a bit too easy. In real life, the gameboard never changes; it is up to the players themselves to make rules to the benefit of all involved. One doesn't just pack it all in and quit and hope everything works out well.

For a play concerned with real problems, this one does not present a realistic solution to them. If working out a solution was the object of the play, and it would seem it was, it has failed.

But this does not preclude the entertaining qualities of "Greaspaint." It is still an en₇ joyable production, well worth seeing. The opportunity is still available tonight and tomorrow. For information call the CAC box

Students present 'Bizarre Behavior'

Bizarre Behavior, a collection of sketches and musical numbers, depicts subtle aspects of the human condition using the outlook of television as an overall concept.

The show will be presented by West Virginia University theater students at 7:30 p.m. Saturday and next Sunday in the Creative Arts Center classroom theater.

Vance Holmes, a 19-year-old sophomore at the university, conceived and directed the two-act musical revue. He has directed and choreographed more than 20 plays in the Pittsburgh area, including Dracula and Good Evening.

He currently is participating in preparations for the musical, *Grease*, as part of the Creative Arts Center's main theater season.

The eight performers in Bizarre Behavior are Matthew Daugherty, Daria Duco, Beth Gallon, Chris Leonard, Preston Mendenhall, Jane Miller, Rene Stewart and Susan Trockenbrot. Margaret Miller is designing the lights.

The script includes popular songs and older tunes, scenes from current shows and obscure pieces.

'Alice' grows up fast this season

By PAULA OTTO Entertainment Writer

Alice in Wonderland isn't just for kids. A junior theatre student has written his own stage version of Lewis Carroll's novels Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass with adults in mind.

Alice is the second production for the theatre department's Second Season. Vance Holmes, a musical theatre major, is directing aand choregraphing his original script.

"I became interested in the books during the summer and

wanted to adapt them into a contemporary play. My version is very close to he book - you'll meet the cheshire cats, the white queen, the door mouse, and most all of Lewis' characters.

"I think people will find it exciting to watch. It's very fast paced - there are 11 scenes in an hour and fifteen minutes." Holmes said.

Holmes has also incorporated music and dance into the production. "The music comes from many sources, sonte of it will be live and some taped. The majority of it is modern, but there are also a few classical pieces," Holmes noted.

The actors, all students, will be kept busy. The seven member cast will play 19 roles. Senior acting major Vanessa Shaffer has the title role of Alice. Shaffer recently performed in the main stage play Suddenly Last Summer.

The idea of student productions in the Classroom Theater is not new, but in the past few years, it has become more organized. The theatre department now officially recognizes Second Season and provides faculty and financial support.

Students perform all the roles - writing, producing, acting and directing. Holmes said of Second Season, "I appreciate it being there so I can do creative things like Alice. However, I think the department could do even more with Second Season; it's such good experience for everyone involved."

Alice will be performed at 7:30 p.m. Oct. 29-30 in the Classroom Theatre of the Creative Arts Center. Admission is free.

Future Second Season offerings include Endgame, Nov. 29-30, directed by Gary McDaniels; and Bent, Dec. 5, directed by David Sindledecker.



Some of the cast of "Sherlock Holmes" at the University of Minnesota Showboat, from left: Vance Holmes, Michael McAlister, Rex J Laura Pulio and Greg De Freer.

SHOWBOAT: Moriarty is docile archvillai

Sherlock Holmes

Who: By William Gillette, directed by Robert Moulton.

Where: University of Minnesota Showboat.

When: 8 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays, 2 and 7 p.m. Sundays; through Aug. 31.

Tickets: \$7, \$6 for students and seniors; call 625-4001.

Review: It's silly, energetic, messy and nostalgic all at once just about what you'd expect from the Showboat. This is not one of the better boat shows in memory but it's hardly one of the worst, and the river ambiance flimflams you into believing you're having a good time, which you probably are.

Continued from page 1C

et of incriminating letters, a couple of fiends, a fiendette and the irrepressibly villainous Professor Moriarty, who in this version must be the most docile and dim-witted of arch rascals ever contrived; he virtually walks into Holmes' study, snarls a bit and then lets Holmes handcuff him without so much as a tortured sneer. Holmes isn't a much brighter light himself. He bumbles into the solution of the case - but what the heck, summer on the river doesn't exactly encourage deductive reasoning, and Holmes does have this morphine habit

The acting is on the clunky, unformed side, with Jeffrey Agnitsch's Holmes a virtual cipher projecting neither wit, intelligence nor much of a command of the King's English

On sheer acting points, and regard less of the plot, this competition goes hands down to Michael McAlister's Moriarty. McAlister is a big, bearded fellow with a booming voice emanating from a roundish, cherubic face and he certainly knows how io growl and thunder with authority. He shows every sign of being an exceptional actor. His olio turn, fully capable of raising the showboat clear out of the water, was the highlight of the evening; in another turn he even played the trumpet passably well

The only other acting that wasn't archly mannered, or bland as Spam came in smaller roles day P. Goeda briskly energized a couple of characters (as a henchman to Holmes in one act and to Moriants in another he got the delicious assignment of himself in another) and he showed both range and a tresh performing presence. Nancy Flom also had a nice form as a French model but not a big of man part to tell what so Director Moulton, overall, s have cast for singing voice than acting skills and seve formers who seem to fade during the play get filled w ocomph during the olios, v far better than they have t cently and slightly less car

Vance Holmes tosses in a musical accompaniment a and Lisa Stephens Payne drops, though generically tional, do conjure up the a nostalgic sentiments — w all, is what the experience about

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from the MITT production of "Cinderella." Brunette)

'Cinderella' is extraordinary

By PATRICK MEIRICK Tribune Staff Writer

ALBERT LEA — This one is special.

Wednesday night was the world premiere of "Cinderella," a family musical by Minnesota Festival Theatre's own David Fields and Vance Holmes. As this edition of the Tribune goes to press, the opening night audience will probably still be raving about the MFT production.

Some who saw it called it "a miracle," "a riot," "fabulous" and "amazing." Children danced in the aisles. Seldom was heard a discouraging word, especially during the standing ovation.

"Cinderella" deserves all the praise. It's a warm and witty retelling of the old story, in the tradition of "Fractured Fairy Tales" and "Into The Woods."

Fields' script explores what motivates the characters, turning the story upside down in the process. Strangely enough, the re-arranged story makes more sense, as well as being funnier.

Case in point: The stepmother (Susan Lynn Scott) just wants enough money to support her high society lifestyle — and the way to get money, she says, is to marry into it. When it appears that her natural daughters (Margo Andrews and Kelli Cramer) won't be able to land the prince, she decides that she must get Cinderella to the royal ball.

But Cinderella, turned off on royalty due to a childhood encounter with the spoiled prince, refuses to go. The stepmother must conjure up a way to persuade Cinderella to change her mind.



"Cinderella" has a subtle serious side, 'too. It encourages self-reliance by debunking reliance on magic, on other people's thinking, on a "someday-myprince-will-come" delusion.

It also thumbs its nose at the importance of external appearances. Near the end of the play, Cinderella gets her stepsisters to "See the Light" and strip away their finery and wigs in a rousing Gospel-tinged number.

The reconciliation of Cinderella and her stepsisters is a remarkably touching moment. After being rejected at the ball, the sisters realize with childlike remorse how they've made Cinderella feel.

One parent said the play was "very healthy and positive" for children. At the same time, there's plenty to keep the adults happy.

The music will please everybody.

Holmes, the music director, wrote the music and most of the lyrics. Director Ron Peluso makes full use of Holmes' talents — he also serves as the storyteller, narrating, singing, filling in parts and playing the piano as needed.

Holmes' styles range from the introductory "Point of View Blues" to the beautiful ballad "Seed Beneath the Snow." During the funky "Don't Give Up," Holmes and Cinderella (Kelly Bertenshaw) get the audience to sing along.

And the rambunctious "I Could Like You If" gives Cinderella and the prince (Fields) some roughhouse choreography to go with the lively music.

In another effective number, Holmes sings "An Ordinary Boy" as the prince, weary of princely duties, performs magic tricks for the children in the front row.

"Cinderella" became an ensemble project in this production. That much was obvious from watching the actors — they all performed as 'if they had a personal stake in it.

Bertenshaw's Cinderella is as charismatic a character as I've seen on stage. Holmes contributes a fantastic voice, nimble fingers and a wry delivery style to the effort. As the prince, Fields works magic — both with the children and in portraying a child himself early in the play.

Scott is warm and wise as Cinderella's natural mother, then wicked and hilarious as the stepmother, Leona. (Any resemblance to any person, living or dead, is purely coincidental ... right?) Andrews and Cramer create a boisterous chemistry between the two stepsisters they play.

The set is notable for its clock backdrop. The center of the clock is a rear-projection screen, allowing images, words and silhouettes to appear as well as hands. The costume design, especially for the stepfamily, garnered several laughs on its own. Several special lighting and sound effects also helped make "Cinderella" extraordinary.

The play runs Wednesdays through Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 7 p.m. from June 26 through July 7 at the Albert Lea Civic Theater.



THE CAST OF CINDERELLA – Pictured, clockwise from left, is the cast of the MFT production of "Cinderella": Sue Scott, Vance Holmes, Kelly Bertenshaw, David Fields, Margo Andrews and Kelli Cramer. There will be special opening-night festivities June 26 at 7 p.m. featuring Viennese waltzes, pastries and "Fairy Godmother punch." (Photo courtesy of MFT)

W

World premiere coming to Albert Lea this week

11 1 is life- Illing mult also be come

"Ain't Misbehavin'" ain't bad

By PATRICK MEIRICK Tribune Staff Writer

ALBERT LEA – The Minnesota Festival Theatre's production of "Ain't Misbehavin'" had the Albert Lea Civic Theatre jumpin' Wednesday. The opening night crowd rewarded the performance with a standing ovation.

"Ain't Misbahavin'" isn't so much a play as it is a revue of Fats Waller music. Accordingly, Robert Muschler's set design strives for a 1948-era cabaret feel. The glossy blue stage is lined with lights and flanked with candlelit tables. The band, "Phil 'n' the Blanks," plays on a raised platform behind the stage and dresses the part of a night club jazz ensemble.

Hitting the ground running, the show gets started with an up-tempo version of the title song, quickly followed by "Lookin' Good but Feelin' Bad," and "Ain't Nobody's Business." The five singers immediately prepare the audience for a good time.

In his first show with the MFT, choreographer and performer Vance Holmes sparkles. He combines a mean set of tap shoes and a rich, powerful voice with an easy, magnetic stage presence. He and Edna Duncan team up for a neat comic bit during "Honeysuckle Rose." Later in Act I, he whips his feet up into a drum solo during "Handful of Keys" and "How Ya Baby."

Andrea Kim Walker proves that you don't need a booming voice to get attention with her rendition of "Squeeze Me." Her vocals, barely above a whisper, perfectly complement her sinuous choreography.

Kimberly Wilson takes a turn atop Phil Bratnober's piano with a nicely understated version of "I've Got a Feeling I'm Falling." Her song comes between the tap dance numbers, like a deep breath.

Morgan Duncan and Walker perform the "Jitterbug Waltz" as marathon dance contestants. "My feet can barely move ... but we're in such a groove," sings Duncan. Audience members in the front row should expect to do some waltzing, too.

The men set up a mini-theme with "The Ladies Who Sing With the Band." Each of the women then takes a solo turn in a different character. Walker does the "Yacht Club Swing" with a hila riously big (and purposely offkey) voice and magnified steps. Then comes Wilson in "When

A review

the Nylons Bloom Again," longing for a return to femininity at the end of World War II.

For "Cash for your Trash," the men present Edna Duncan "for the first time on any stage." She starts out tentatively, then gets very much into the song as she thinks about what she'll do between recycling trips. The notion of Duncan as an amateur is hard to swallow anyway; she has a sassy voice that floats effortlessly around the melody, plus a good feel for comedy.

Act I comes to a close with a show-stopper, "The Joint is Jumpin'." It literally kept the audience humming all the way through intermission — which made quite a clamor in the lobby.

The performers emerged all gussied up for the second act and started "Spreadin' Rhythym Around." That's followed by "Lounging at the Waldorf," featuring close harmony from the women and some fun staging with hula hoops.

Edna Duncan takes down the pace with the tuneful "Mean to Me." Right on the heels of that song follows "Your Feet's Too Big." This is Morgan Duncan's big number, and he makes the most of it, getting the audience to chime in on the chorus. He has fun with Waller's improbable lyrics: "Your pedal extremities are collosal/ To me you look like a fossil." He has a clear, mellow baritone and can hold his own with Holmes when it comes time to tap.

Holmes and Walker follow that act with the feisty "That Ain't Right." They take turns berating each other for the wrongs they've done.

Wilson emerges out of the audience in a slinky black dress and a boa with "Keeping Out of Mischief." Here Wilson finds her range, delivering the torch song with a strong alto voice.

The next two songs are fun, same-sex duets. Edna Duncan and Wilson offer musical advice on men in "Find Out What They Like." They sing dynamically, though the highest parts of the har meny-edge out of tune slightly, That's followed by Morgan Duncan and Holmes singing about a man whose "Fat and Greasy." Again, the audience joined in opening night.

"Black and Blue" features the best ensemble singing of the



DOIN THE JITTERBUG WALTZ — Morgan Duncan and Andrea Kim Walker do the dance contest number, "Jitterbug Waltz," at the Minnesota Festival Theatre production of "Ain't Misbehavin'," The show runs through June 23 at the Civic Theatre (Tribuue photo by Mike Brunette)

how as well as the deepest by and choosed as on the star ies: "I'm while inside, but that are gave a unal bow lon't help my case? because I is an t Misbehava" is an

summer.

can't hide what's on my tace. The finale goes all out with

four more songs. The audience rose to its feel as the performers exited, clapped to the band,

Ron Peluso, runs Wednesdays-Saturdays through June 23.

indication. Albert Lea is in for a

series of theatrical treats this

The production, directed by

'Jazz Barber' a smashing good time

By GERI McSHANE Tribune Staff Writer

ALBERT LEA — Minnesota Festival Theatre has done it again. The theatre has produced another smashing new work that has audience members tapping their toes, humming, smiling and laughing a lot.

A review

"The Opera Theatre of Figaro: Jazz Barber of Seville" is pure fun. It's the story of the singing, tapdancing barber, Figaro (Morgan Duncan), who's written a jazz opera. He convinces his customers to take roles in his work, and guides them through the plot. That's easier said than done, since the actors have ideas of their own on how things should run.

Figaro convinces his first customer (John Bentley) to play Count Almaviva, who's come in disguise looking for a bride in second customer, Rosine (Melanie Eileen Martin). But Rosine is held captive by the fourth customer, evil Doctor Bartholo (James A. Williams) and third customer/music instructor Madame Basilio (Stephanie Lusco).

The story lends itself to some great music. From the beautiful "Meadowlark" (see if you don't find yourself humming that one after you leave the theatre) to the raucous "Daddy, You Better Treat Me Good" (which had the opening night audience in stitches), playwright, composer and lyricist Vance Holmes has successfully combined almost every type of music in this production — even a little bit of opera!

The casting is superb. Everybody loves Duncan, and this piece is perfect for him because it gives him a chance to ham it up, sing a little, dance a little (love those shoes!) and tell a few jokes. Much of the action takes place in his imagination.

And particularly enjoyable is the vaudeville sketch that's written into the script. It's fun to see the banter between Williams and Duncan, and Duncan's special salute to Granddaddy Clarence, the best singing and tap-dancing barber of them all.



LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT — It's love at first sight between Rosine (Melanie Elleen Martin) and Count Almaviva (John Bentley). They've been brought together by Figaro the barber (Morgan Duncan) in "The Opera Theatre of

"Why are you always tap-dancing?" asks Williams.

"Because I'm descended from a long line of tap-dancing barbers," answers Duncan. And he goes into a little dance. This time the cast lets him, but if he'd had his own way, he would have included a tapdance scene in between each act. See why Figaro can't keep his story on track?

Martin, who joined the cast at the last minute, is wonderful. She's obviously relishing the role, and her beautiful voice and graceful dancing make her perfect as Rosine.

Bentley is equally as enjoyable as Count Almaviva. His singing and dancing are great, but it's his quick-change scene at all the doors and windows to Doctor Bartholo's home in an attempt to save Rosine that the audience really loves.

The decision to make the music teacher a woman instead of a man was an excellent one too. Stephanie Lusco has everyone laughing as she tries to entice the grumpy doctor. She won't exit without "her" music. She shines in her tribute to opera heroines, something she calls Rosine's "music lesson for today," and obviously the right advice at just the right time: Listen to your heart.

As the evil doctor, Williams is amusing. His deep voice lends itself well to the badness of his character. Grumpy, grumpy, bad to the bone, but watch him soften whên there's money involved.

Another fun scene written into the plot is the "storm ballet" which is taken pretty literally. The cast comes out in dark trench coats

Albert Lea Civic Theatre. (Tribune photo by Geri McShane)

Figaro: Jazz Barber of Seville." The all-new

production runs through Sunday at the

with dark umbrellas in the dark and move in a mysterious way to themes from "Perry Mason" and "Mission Impossible."

The set design is clever: musical notes painted on a backdrop, a la "Laugh In," where small doors and windows open and allow cast members a chance to break in just about any time they feel like it. And of course, there's a barber shop, music room and balcony.

The musicians, under the direction of Phil Bratnober, deserve a special mention. It's fun to see a small but live orchestra do such an excellent job with this new music.

"Jazz Barber of Seville" only runs through Sunday at the Civic Theatre. Call 377-4371 for reservations.

'Figaro' beyond description

By Ruth Nerhaugen

Don't expect. In fact, the less you try to anticipate what's going to happen next in "Figaro Jazz Barber of Seville," the more you're likely to enjoy it.

Show times

Figaro: Jazz Barber of Seville can be seen at 3 and 8 p.m. today, and 3 p.m. Sunday

Review

An original musical by Vance Holmes, directed by Ron Peluso, the show is being presented this weekend at the Sheldon Theatre by Minnesota Festival Theatre of Albert Lea, Minn., a professional company

This particular "Figaro" doesn't fit any standard descriptions. It's certainly not

opera, although it borrows from opera and pokes affectionate fun at it, and it's not strictly jazz or comedy although it swings and amuses

There's a broad hint in the finale, when the five-member cast sings "Let the Music Take You." It does — from aria to scat and many interesting places in between.

Turn to FIGARO, page 2

Figaro

Continued from page 1

Figaro makes it happen. Morgan Duncan plays the title character, a barber from a family of tap-dancing men who dreams of writing an opera. He chooses to jazz up "Barber of Seville" and lures his customers into playing the key roles.

The production doesn't seriously pretend to be grounded in reality, though. As the program explains, "The action takes place in Figaro's barbershop and in his imagination."

Figaro's world is peopled by four characters: John Bentley, a handsome young hero type who plays Count Almaviva; Melanie Eileen Martin, a sweet young thing who assumes the role of Rosine; Stephanie Lusco, a blues singer who becomes Madame Basilio; and James A. Williams, who agrees to play Dr. Bartholo but reserves the right to challenge Figaro's script.

As the show progresses the characters blend into an ensemble, pairing off for duets or coming together in three-people confrontations or full production numbers.

None of the voices is overpowering, although a couple of the musical numbers are memorable, such as the battle of the vamps.

The young lovers are pleasingly tender and the doctor is amusingly melodramatic. Madame Basilio has a particularly clever number in which she warns the ingenue about what usually happens to heroines in operas.

Figaro's solo song and dance tribute to his Grandpa Clarence is an outstanding demonstration. The strobe dance and the "storm ballet," played to the music of assorted secret agent man theme songs, are highlights of the production.

"Jazz Barber" has good technical support in all areas, from choreography and musical accompaniment to imaginative costumes

and a set featuring a "Laugh-In" style window wall resembling a musical score.

Friday night's crowd was small. Word of mouth likely will boost attendance tonight and Sunday, but the numbers probably won't be as good as hoped.

It would be unfortunate if the Albert Lea company was discouraged by the response from Red Wing. Given time and a chance to build familiarity, this is a troupe the community truly could come to appreciate.

Low-budget staging of "She Stoops' succeeds

By Peter Vaughan/Staff Writer

Oliver Goldsmith's "She Stoops to Conquer," at Outcast Players Theatre, is one of the theater's most compact, enjoyable comedies.

The script fairly bubbles with laughter and good will as it tells the slightly probable tale of a shy young suitor who loses his inhibitions only in the company of servants and common folk.

When the meek Charles Marlow is duped into believing that the manorial home of his yet-to-be-met fiancee is an inn and that his intended is a serving girl, the situation that unfolds over a single hectic night turns into a comic masterpiece filled with bold characters and slightly barbed social commentary.

A review

It's not surprising that "She Stoops to Conquer" is a staple of regionaland college-theater circuits where it has consistently provided plenty of laughs for audiences of most ages and backgrounds.

The Outcast production, directed by Vance Holmes, barely skims the surface of the play's charms. The level of acting is uneven, the production values are minimal and exude the scent of compromise born of poverty. (Metal roll-away beds and contemporary penny loafers are not convincing 18th-century props.)

Yet, the play is strong enough and Holmes' hands on the reins firm enough that some of "She Stoops" charm comes through.

The strongest point of this production is its pacing. Holmes and his young cast fairly race through the play's 22 scenes, obscuring the production's shortcomings and allowing little time to consider anything but the galloping plot.

While much of the acting is earnest at best, a couple of performances capture the comic zest of Goldsmith's play.

Jennifer Adams is forceful and suitably frantic as Mrs. Hardcastle, whose principal defect is her blind devotion to the knavish Tony Lumpkin, her son by a previous marriage. Michelle Plocher gives a spirited, intelligent performance as Kate, the young woman who knowingly

She Stoops to Conquer

Who: Outcast Theatre. Directed by Vance Holmes.

Where: Kenwood Community Center, 2101 W. Franklin Av., Minneapolis.

When: Through May 21.

Tickets: \$7; call 333-5060.

Review: Though this is far from a brilliant production, it has enough pace and spirit to exhibit many of the charms of Oliver Goldsmith's bright comedy about a shy young man who only shines in the presence of servants and common folk.

stoops to win her man.

vorkshop accomplishment



Staff Photo/Sue Botsford

Children's Theatre Workshop choreographer Vance Holmes puts his protegees through their paces during a rehearsal for "Noah's Journey," to be performed at E. Glenn Giltz Memorial Auditorium, Hawkins Hall on Saturday at 3 p.m.

grown fond of working with kids.

"They haven't tried our patience," said Ruth, "and they've been very creative, spontaneous and exciting to watch."

"I enjoy working with kids and learning along with them what works and what doesn't

with the improvisational games," added Holmes. "It's also dynamic to see which kids take the lead. So far everything's worked out well and none of the kids are jealous of each other. The youngest kids don't sit back, either. They're just as enthusiastic as all the

others."

"Noah's Journey" will make its one-performance debut in Hawkins Hall on Saturday at 3 p.m. and tickets will be on sale at the door for \$4.50. For more information call the Center for Art, Music and Theatre at 561-2180.



OOH LA LA, LA CABARET: GOOD SONGS, WEAK BOOK

Listen to the Music

BY ROBERT COLLINS

PARIS BETWEEN THE WARS WAS THE CABARET capital of the world, and the most famous cabaret of all was run by a red-haired American black woman who went by the name of Bricktop. In a city overflowing with celebrities, none was more celebrated than Bricktop. Ooh La La, La Cabaret is a musical revue-cum-history lesson that serves up some wonderful music written by the likes of Cole Porter, Duke Ellington, Eubie Blake, and Cab Calloway, and at the same time spoon-feeds us biographical information about the one and only Bricktop. When the music is playing, this revue is hard to top. When the historical narrative kicks in. though, our interest wanes. It never wanes enough to spoil our fun, but makes us wish the narrative were either beefed up or pretty much scrapped in favor of more music and dance.

Mary Leer, owner and host at Ruby's Cabaret, plays the role of Bricktop. Leer is neither black nor red-headed, which takes a bit of getting used to when she has to say lines such as "I'm 100 percent American Negro with a trigger Irish temper." Once the music starts playing, though, we forget all our reservations.

The multitalented Vance Holmes heads a



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Mary Kelley Lear, Zhauna Franks, Vance Holmes, Michael Matthew Ferrell, and Dara Ceaser (clockwise from left) of the Ooh La La outfit.

superb seven-piece orchestra. Holmes not only plays piano and sings but tap dances as well. Zhauna Franks and Michael Matthew Ferrell handle the principal dancing assignments, which range from a knockoff of Fred and Adele Astaire to a jazzy Charleston to banana dancing a la Josephine Baker. Ferrell and Dara Ceaser handle the singing. Ferrell gives a great comic performance of Cole Porter's "You've Got That Thing." Ceaser does a top job with Fats Waller's "Black and

Blue,'' among other songs. Ooh La La, La Cabaret is great to listen to.

> OOH LA LA, LA CABARET CONTINUES AT RUBY'S CABARET THROUGH FEBRUARY 24.

Ruby's 'Ooh La La' pays homage to ghost of cabaret legend Bricktop

A review

By Mike Steele / Staff Writer

Every profession has its heroes, its mythical antecedents staring omnipresently from the shadows of history, serving as psychic models. Newspaper folk, in their private moments, still see the ghosts of Ben Hecht, H.L. Mencken, Damon Runyon, maybe Woodward and Bernstein, shadowy memories of an exciting past that counted. Educators, doctors, lawyers, businessmen, all have these forebears, part nostalgia, part paradigm.

It's not surprising, then, that even in the already shadowy, late-night world of cabaret there are distant specters of mythical dimensions.

Cabaret in this town means Ruby's Cabaret, and that means owner Mary Leer. Leer always has had a strong sense of historical place.

RUBY'S Continued on page 5E



Staff Photo/ Richard Sennott

The lead singer in "Ooh La La, La Cabaret" is Dara Ceaser, who has fun with her material and shows a nice range.

Ruby's

Continued from page 1E

Resonances of cabaret's legendary past in Germany, France and Switzerland often are present in Ruby's shows.

If Leer has a single model, however, a dominating historical ghost with whom she most strongly identifies, it's the legendary Bricktop, the American-born red-headed black woman who dominated the Parisian cabaret scene during the Jazz Age, playing host to the most glittering celebrities on the continent while opening her stage to a host of American black performers seeking a respite from hometown racism.

Ruby's newest show, "Ooh La La, La Cabaret," is partly a concert of the songs and dances popular in French cabarets between the wars — and a dandy concert it is — and partly a very personal *homage à Bricktop*. In this portion of the concert Leer assumes a historical identity: she becomes Bricktop.

The connection isn't a particularly easy one. Leer is a personality, a bundle of drive, ego, chutzpah and singular tastes who has created a popular, personable cabaret. When

Star Tribune/ Monday/February 12/1990



dialogue as Bricktop is self-serving, rambling and repetitious or, too often, banal: "That Cole Porter, he was a remarkable talent." She tries too hard to justify and over-explain the Bricktop myth rather than just celebrate it, creating an egomaniacal presence rather than an endearing one.

The problem isn't that Leer is white and dark-haired. The connection through history could have been a warm homage or a touching acknowledgment of roots. It's that Leer didn't play Leer in homage to Bricktop. It's doubtful that even Bricktop could have played Bricktop, at least not with this script.

Structurally the story of Bricktop seems tacked on to the proceedings, at best a shaky framing device for the songs, at worst a schoolmarmish history-social studies lesson. Like most such revues, the historical material has been laid over the proceedings, not woven through them, and the Bricktop story becomes intrusive and rhythmically bumpy rather than the evening's reason for being.

If the evening as a whole is uneven, however, the musical part of it ranging from Ellington, Calloway and Bechet to Porter — is great. The real star of the show is Vance Holmes, who leads the seven-memStan Photo by Richard Sennott

The cast of "Ooh La La, La Cabaret," from left: Mary Leer, Zhauna Franks, Vance Holmes, Dara Ceaser and Michael Matthew Ferrell.

Ooh La La, La Cabaret

Who: Conceived by Mary Leer and Anita Ruth, musical direction by Vance Holmes, choreography by Myron Johnson.

Where: Ruby's Cabaret, 400 3rd Av. N.

When: Thursdays and Fridays at 7:30 p.m., Saturdays at 7:30 and 10:30, through Feb. 24.

Tickets: \$10 to \$15; call 333-1006.

Review: An homage to legendary Parisian cabaret owner Bricktop goes awry but the songs and dances, led by the amazingly versatile Vance Holmes, are terrific and the entertainment value of the evening is sky high.

at the second second

ber band from the piano, sings with verve, dances up a storm, acts and oozes charm over every inch of the stage. He's a young performer, but he knows how to get inside a song emotionally, whether talk-singing his way through "Runnin' Wild," being a one-man choral backup to other singers, bringing out the bittersweet sentiments of Porter's "You Don't Know Paree" or belting out a Blake and Sissel standard. He's superb and he's backed by a first-rate band.

The lead singer is Dara Ceaser, a big, enveloping personality who has great fun with her material and also shows a nice range whether down in breathy blues or belting in the upper register's.

The dancers are Zhauna Franks and Michael Matthew Ferrell, both from Ballet of the Dolls, who get a nice Fred and Adele Astaire turn, have a good time leading the cast in the Charleston and also manage to get off some nice tap riffs, joined by the versatile Holmes. Ferrell also presents a campy, self-directed rendition of Porter's "You've Got That Thing" that's a hoot.

The entertainment value of the show is sky high and the historical narrative, while interruptive, never pulls it down to earth. It soars and makes the evening worthwhile. The costumes by Lyle Jackson and Joanne Moyer sparkle with period flavor and fun, and Michael Murnane's lighting makes skillful use of shadowy emotions and mirror reflections off the back wall.

Jazz version highlights 'Nutcracker' variations

By Mike Steele/Staff Writer

Nut-nutty-Nutcrackery, whoa! 'Tis the season, no question: From out of the closets this time of year pour wee mice, magic uncles, resplendent soldiers, dancing sugar plums''Nutcrackers'' in Bavaria, on Alpine ice, on film and, in this year's most unusual case, on Chicago's South Side. People can't get enough of them.

There's variety again this year, beginning with a big new "Nutcracker" at Northrop Auditorium, where the Cincinnati. New Orleans Ballet replaces Seattle's Pacific Northwest Ballet (which had replaced the longstanding Minnesota Dance Theatre tradition with Loyce Houlton's choreography). This new version is billed as more traditional than past ones and was choreographed by Ben Stevenson, head of the Houston Ballet. It will have seven performances Nov. 28 through Dec. 2.

And Dorothy Hamill is back at the Orpheum Theatre in Minneapolis with "Nutcracker on Ice." Word is that the former Olympic figure-skater has worked on the choreography since last year's first "Nutcracker on Ice," that the stage size will be increased and that the whole production will be bigger and bolder than last year's. It will play Dec. 7 through 23.

Every season also seems to bring an angular take on the

NUTCRACKERS Continued on 9F

NUTCRACKERS: Ellington version taps into '40s

Continued from page 1F

venerable "Nutcracker." This year the venue once again is Ruby's Cabaret, where last year Myron Johnson did his own idiosyncratic version for Ballet of the Dolls. Starting Nov. 30, director-dancer-actormusician Vance Holmes will present "The Jazz Nutcracker," a mostly tap-dance version done to a rare 1960 arrangement of Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker Suite" by Duke Ellington (with Billy Strayhorn), and filled out with Ellington standards and rarities. It plays through Dec. 23.

Holmes, who fondly remembers his family Christmases in Pittsburgh, first heard about the Ellington arrangements five years ago and began searching through record stores for a rare, limited-edition copy by Columbia, which had long since gone out of print. He finally found one in Burbank, Calif.

"It cost \$70 but it was unplayed and I had to have it," he said. (Since then, it has been reissued on a budget-priced CD.)

Holmes ended up at the University of Minnesota, getting a master's degree in directing, and he has been acting at the Children's Theatre Company, where he recently choreographed "Madeline's All Holmes had to do was to create it and find a cast of tappers.

"I knew I wanted to set it in the 1950s," he said, "around a black family. The piece has a late '40s sound and somehow Chicago's South Side seemed appropriate to that swing feeling."

It also was a simpler, happier time, without war, before drugs, filled with its own upbeat urban nostalgia.

Holmes is sticking to the broad outlines of the "Nutcracker" story, but with some significantly different specifics. The Christmas Eve party centers on a small black girl (Jennifer Weston) named Claire and her magical Uncle D (Peter Macon), who takes her on a wondrous dream journey.

But instead of heading into the fantasies of a white, upper-class German girl, Claire's journey heads where a city child finds mystery and wonder: an office, a coffeehouse, a train station.

Other things will remain the same as usual: all those dancing candies (a universal dream, apparently) and a chocolate prince and princess, who turn out to be her mom and dad. The dancing candies — sugary reincarnations of guests at Claire's party — will take up much of the second act, which ends with a dance for several nutcrackers. Holmes will dance the chief nutcracker.

Because this "Nutcracker" is as much Ellington's as Tchaikovsky's, Ellington changed the name of several divertissements and character names. The traditional "Dance of the Reed Pipes," for instance, was retitled "Caliopatootie toot toot tootie Toot," then shortened to just "Toot Toot Tootie Toot" after no one could spell the original. The Sugar Plum Fairy is now the Sugar Rum Cherry, the "Waltz of the Flowers" is "Danse of the Floreadores," the "Arabian Dance" the "Arabesque Cookie" and so on.

Holmes' choreographic test has been to expand the expressive limits of tap. "It can't just be tap number after tap number with audiences saying, 'Wow,' " said Holmes. "It's like juggling: there's a limit to how much audiences can take, unless you find something new to do with it. So we're going way beyond the basic buck-andwing."

The other problem is that tap with all its rhythmic, percussive sounds - can drown out the music. To tone it down, Holmes has woven in some jazz and theater dance. "We just pull back and then let it out at climaxes," he said. "It sounds like artillery going off."

His other big problem was finding good tappers. His cast has 16 performers playing 36 roles, many of whom have to be expert tappers.

"I needed real dancers, and if they existed, I found them: I looked everywhere." The result is a multicultural crew including white dancers Michael Farreil, late of Ballet of the Dolls, and Tony Vierling, formerly of Chanhassen Dinner Theater. The Fortune Cookie (not from Tchaikovsky) will be danced by Chan Vang, a Laotian dancer; Uncle D is black dancer Peter Macon, complete with dreadlocks.

Claire was the hardest to cast. Holmes remembered a small black girl from the Children's Theatre musical "Little Miss Hollywood." She hadn't been in CTC shows since then and Holmes couldn't find out who she was. After calling various dance schools asking for recommendations, one teacher sent his star pupil for an audition. "And it was her, Jenny Weston, just unbelievable!" he exulted.

'42nd Street' is still paved with gold

By Maggi Kramm

Special to the Pioneer Press Dispatch

First, it was a novel; then, in the same year, a highly successful film. Nearly 50 years later, in 1980, with the same filmsy plot and two-dimensional characters, it became a blockbuster hit on Broadway — and it's been packing the houses ever since.

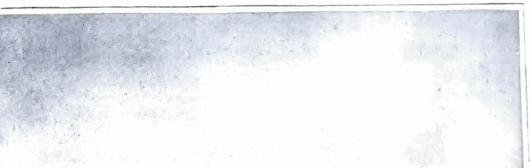
"42nd Street." now on the Chanhassen Dinner Theatre's mainstage, is the likable, corny show-biz story that crystallized one of Broadway's favorite cliches: that of the fresh-faced chorus girl who, rehearsing a show called "Pretty Lady," fills in for the snooty leading lady who has injured herself just before the show's premiere. The Svengali-like director works her mercilessly on the part for 36 hours: and, out of sheer love for the business and desire to give the public an evening of joy, the chorine "goes out a kid and comes back a star."

REVIEW

There are the requisite smarttalking chorus girls, a romantic young tenor and a final, reluctant act of generosity by the ailing prima donna as she helps the rising new star.

All of these are elements of "42nd Street." But, first and foremost, the show is an excuse for trotting out a bevy of precision tap dancers and reveling in Harry Warren and Al Dubin's famous songs. Besides the film's original "Shuffle Off to Buffalo" and "42nd Street." Gower Champion's stage version brings in other Warren classics such as "We're in the Money," "Lullaby of Broadway" and "About a Quarter to Nine."

Casting an eye not to the skeptical '80s but to the stagestruck '30s, Chanhassen Artistic Director Michael Brindisi has staged the musical with verve and style. His prin-



cipals deliver their slang-filled lines without a trace of irony and appear to take the show's sunny optimism at face value. The result is an evening of glitzy, mindless fun, pleasant singing and dancing and not a shred of dramatic tension to wrinkle your brow.

Leslie Gatterdam is charming as the aspiring star, Peggy; as they say in the script, she's quite a hoofer, chirps pretty good and is a looker besides. Delrae Novak (Dorothy, the aging prima donna) possesses a lovely, strong voice and the imperiousness one would expect of a pampered Broadway veteran.

Paul Boesing, as "Pretty Lady's" worried producer-director, sings "Lullaby of Broadway" and the reprise of "42nd Street" with rich lyricism. In both singing and acting, Boesing is the only one in the cast who brings a sense of depth — a world-weary quality — to his character. Not that the show leaves much room for depth, of course, but it's a refreshing touch of reality, especially after the endless parade of cheerful cut-out characters.

Unlike those of Chanhassen's "A Chorus Line" a couple of years ago, the dancers in "42nd Street" have been cast locally. Most seem more adept at jazz and modern dance

than tap, and none but lead dancer Vance Holmes approaches the sort of tap-dance virtuosity that makes an audience gasp with delight. But choreographer Myron Johnson has cannily combined balletic movements with rather basic dance steps for his perky, crowd-pleasing numbers.

Maggi Kramm reviews theater for the Minnesota Daily.

"42ND STREET"

Music by: Harry Warren Lyrics by: Al Dubin Book by: Michael Stewart and Mark Bramble Director: Michael Brindisi Sets: Nayna Ramey Costumes: Sandra Nei Schulte Lights: Sue Ellen Berger Cast: Leslie Gatterdam, Delrae Novak, Paul Boesing, Tom Schumacher, Merriann Gleason, Joel Hatch, Manon Gimlett and Aaron S. Milgrom When: Tuesdays-Sundays; indefinite run Where: Chanhassen Dinner Theatre Highways 101 and 5 Chanhassen Tickets: \$34,95-\$18,95 ■ Phone: 934-1525



Staff Photo by Duane Braley

Vance Holmes as Josh Biltmore and Jolayne Berg as Emily Chapel in Children's Theatre Company's "Little Miss Hollywood."

By David Hawley Staff Writer

In nine years of reviewing productions at the Children's Theatre Company, "Little Miss Hollywood" is the closest thing I've seen to a commercial musical.

Staged in brisk fashion by CTC Artistic Director Jon Cranney, it's an entertaining show with an oldfashioned feeling, but like many of the musicals from the past, you see its gears and you get the impression that it was assembled by a committee. Moreover, the CTC production looks something like an out-of-town tryout or an early preview, with chunks of material slammed together, waiting for the final polish that will cover the seams.

At its heart, "Little Miss Hollywood" is a highly skilled salute to frothy backstage musicals like "42nd Street," with elements of not-so-nice show-biz reality — like "Gypsy," but not as raw as "A Chorus Line." It also has a chorus of fleet-footed, urchin-like kids who look as though they stepped out of the orphanage in "Annie."

In its heaviest moments, the story deals with racism and child exploitation and, in the end, the way these themes are handled seems unsatisfyingly timid. There's a little-of-everything quality to it — a little message, a lot of broad-caricatured fun, plenty of tap-dancing and song.

Somehow, however, it's too instructive to be an empty-headed entertainment, yet also too simpleminded to be much more than a moralistic bromide.

The book by Dale Wilson sets the scene on the sound stage of Magnum Studios, a fictional Hollywood movie-making factory of the 1930s.

REVIEW

"LITTLE MISS HOLLYWOOD"

By: Dale Wilson (book) and Mel Marvin (music); lyrics by Wilson and Marvin; conceived and directed by Jon Cranney.

Choreography: Myron Johnson

■ Sets: Marjorie Bradley Kellogg

Costumes: David Kay Mickelsen

Lights: Duane Schuler

When: Matinee and evening performances through April 12.

Where: The Children's Theatre Company

2400 Third Ave. S. Minneapolis ■ Tickets: \$15.75-\$6.75 ■ Phone: 874-0400

The central characters are a white curly-headed child star named Emily Chapel and a black broadway hoofer named Josh "C.C. Huckles" Biltmore, who has been brought out from New York for his movie debut.

The resemblance of these characters to Shirley Temple and her frequent co-star, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, is deliberate. In fact, the show's finale finds both doing a step dance in an obvious homage to the famous Temple-Robinson duet in "The Little Colonel."

When he first arrives in Hollywood, Biltmore says he will be willing to do almost anything except perform with children and animals. To his chagrin, he discovers that he's slated to appear with Chapel in a sequel to "King Kong." Although he's baited by jealous costars and faced with the humiliation of black stereotyping, he rises above it by virtue of awe-inspiring talent.

Along the way, he forms a special friendship with Chapel, based on a mutal love of dancing. As for the rest of the world, Biltmore teaches his towheaded friend that "people will find out one person at a time how wrong they can be."

After a slightly stuttering start — the first production number, titled "Misbehavin' Feet," sags despite vigorous tap dancing — the show flows on a menu of pleasant songs by Mel Marvin. Among them is a wonderful anger number in which a quartet of jealous co-stars plot Biltmore's downfall while riding about on pallets and other bits of stage equipment. Marvin gives each member of the cabal a distinctive musical personality.

The second act includes the best numbers, however. "Harlem" involves Biltmore and a dozen kids in a swell tap number — very traditional, with breakaway choruses and a boffo reprise.

"All I Ever Wanted," a sentimental duet for Emily and her mother, provides a perfect musical explanation for the change in their relationship. "Makin' Movie History" is a comic interlude sung by the studio head and his secretary and, in traditional fashion, this leads to the big finale: the step dance titled "Making Our Way"

All show Marvin as a first-rate composer who knows the heritage of Broadway and film musicals. There's a hint of Tin Pan Alley brightness to some of his songs, a real traditional feel. Simply put, it's a first-class musical score.

The play is deliberately filled with stock Hollywood-fable stereotypes — the vain leading man, the acid-tongued screen siren, the bellowing, cigar-smoking studio mogul and his harried secretary, the star-struck mother living vicariously through her child's career, the viperish choreographer who attempts to sabotage the proceedings Of these sharply drawn stock characters, only the stage mother - sweetly portrayed by Lizanne Wilson - is given a more human, compassionate tone. She's the only secondary character who is changed for the better by play's end.

Despite the broad strokes of characterization, this is a strong cast. Vance Holmes is a talented song-and-dance man, with a pleasing, thoroughly decent-seeming stage personality, a fine singing voice and amazing feet. Jolayne Berg, a talented 12-year-old, is endearing as the child star. She provides a good match for Holmes in the duets that have been choreographed in vintage film-musical style by Myron Johnson Among the others, Richard Long is terrifically nasty as the viperish choreographer, and J.C. Cutler is always funny as the bellowing, vulgar studio head

In all, it's a nice-looking production, cleverly placed on a movie sound stage designed by Marjorie Bradley Kellogg that permits freeflowing scene changes. If there is a specific defect, however, it's the fact that the commercial sheen of the show seems to beg for a far more glittering production something on the order of Broadway overkill.

Indeed, for all its size and pizzazz, this show seems hasty and unpolished, a good show in need of additional work. Considering the survival problems faced by musical shows these days, we can only hope the CTC production won't be the last for "Little Miss Hollywood."

- Comparata Campa

By Mike Steele/Staff Writer

If the road to heaven were paved with good intentions, the Children's Theatre Company's new musical 'Little Miss Hollywood'' would be soaring over the rainbow.

As it stands, the show has enough grand diversions — some witty and soaring tunes by Mel Marvin, splendid production values, savvy direction by Jon Cranney, exciting choeography by Myron Johnson, very good performances — to keep it from falling into that crowded sector of the inferno reserved for totally misjudged musicals.

"Little Miss Hollywood," Cranney's brainchild, is in fact a terrific idea for a musical, especially for the

A review

Children's Theatre. It's about child movie stars of the Shirley Temple era who wade through waves of illusion and exploitation as they discover that they can have an important say in directing their lives.

It's colorfully set in Marjorie Bradley Kellogg's sound studio setting with the Hollywood Hills in the background and decked out in sprightly, witty costumes by David Kay Mickelsen. It presents audiences with lively doses of history and nostalgia about the early days of Hollywood and the social atmos-

Hollywood continued on page 5C

Continued from page 4C

phere of the Great Depression.

But all these wonderful things still have to work together dramatically, and that's where we get to the great bugaboo of the modern musical: the book. Dale Wilson's play is a certainly earnest, and its heart is in the right place, but ultimately its good intentions get it consigned to the flames.

Musical books are a difficult medium and they get more difficult as they get more ambitious. Wilson has tried to pack a lot into a twohour show. He tries to conjure up the atmosphere of the times. He tries to keep things comic and entertaining. He also tries to deal with issues of Hollywood illusion versus Depression-era reality, the exploitation of kids, racism and the economic imperatives of commercial entertainment and other heady subjects. What's more, he seems to have tried to aim his themes at young audiences by making them immediate, accessible and simple.

To do all this, however, and still have time for songs, dances and scene shifts, he's reduced his characters to cartoons, his incidents to cliches and his dialogue to little more than homiletic bromides. The result is a simplistic script that reduces both concept and characters to groaningly contrived simplemindedness.

The story is fictional but based on the relationship of Shirley Temple (Emily Chapel in the play) with the great black tap dancer Bill (Bojangles) Robinson, who becomes Josh Biltmore here. Emily's kid movie successes are keeping Magnum Studios alive, yet the combination of an overprotective mother and self-serving studio personnel keep her from enjoying a childhood. When Josh arrives from Broadway, where he's been a star in black musicals, she discovers a kindred spirit. He, too, is a star whose talents are being exploited. Yet to see his own movies, he has to sit in the balcony and, when photographers are around, he isn't allowed too close to the adorable blonde Emily.

What good-spirited kid in the audience wouldn't rejoice when the two of them begin seeing through the hype and jive and, with the help of a gang of like-minded child actors, take control of their own picture? But the play's villains become such obvious straw men, the liberal platitudes of the play's heroes so dripping with niceness, the stage so awash in epigrammatic corn that one almost wants to pull for the bad guys.

Nevertheless, Cranney and troupe have given it a wonderful go. Mel Marvin's songs are nicely crafted with a good sense of theatrical momentum and building excitement. They sound vaguely like standards of the past without being obviously eclectic and they set the mood deftly for both scenes and characters.

The two leading characters fill the stage with all the breezy personality the script lacks. Vance Holmes as Josh is a real find, a personable, charming performer with a wellprojected and winning voice and a dazzling dance technique. His act two opener, "Homesick for Harlem," in which he prances in the midst of a score of wildly tapping kids who literally throw themselves over the stage, is a sensational show stopper.

As Emily, Jolayne Berg is exceptional at combining her cute, rosycheeked screen persona with both the sensitively questioning and mischievously plotting little girl that make up her real personality. Berg manages charm without cloying sweetness and carries the center of the show like a seasoned pro. The remainder of the cast pretty much tries to fill out cliched caricatures, a few of them objectionable, and for the most part they do so with a big, open eagerness. Especially effective were John Cutler as the studio's boss, Rosalie Tenseth as his secretary and Lizanne Wilson as

Emily's mother.

Cranney keeps the

C7

Section editor Kathryn Storring 894-2231, ext. 630 Kitchener-Waterloo Record

Tuesday, Nov. 28, 1989

Entertai



Raggedy dancers

Raggedy Ann (left), played by Jill Olsen, and Raggedy Andy, played by Vance Holmes, dance up a storm Monday at Centre in the Square. Presented by the Children's Theatre Company of Minneapolis, Raggedy Ann & Andy continues with performances tonight and Wednesday.

THEATER REVIEW

CTC musical 'Mr. Popper's Penguins' wonderfully entertaining throughout

ERIN HART STAFF WRITER

Written almost half a century before "E.T." broke all box office records, "Mr. Popper's Penguins" beat Stephen Spielberg to the punch in its gentle exploration of an other-worldly friendship.

The Children's Theatre Company has landed another solid hit with its new musical version of the story by Richard and Florence Atwater. Timothy Mason's adaptation is a nimble, helter-skelter dash through 1930s America, a breathless adventure story underpinned by bittersweet reality.

Mr. Popper is a house painter, a retiring man who slakes his thirst for adventure by holing up all winter with back issues of "The National Geographic" and writing letters to his hero, the antarctic explorer Admiral Drake. One day, a mysterious package arrives on Popper's doorstep, marked "Keep Cool" and "Open at Once." One peek at a 4-foot penguin emerging from its crate, and the children in the audience are unable to contain themselves.

Mel Marvin's jazzy music is the perfect complement to Mason's tin-pan-alley rhymes. A sample: "It's black and white and dapper/It's a perky whippersnapper/But you haven't heard the capper/This bird dances like a WHAT: "Mr. Popper's Penguins" WHERE: Children's Theatre Company

WHEN: Friday. Repeat performances run in repertory through Nov. 14. Evening performances at 7:30 p.m., Saturday and Sunday matinees at 2 p.m., Sunday evening at 5 p.m. TICKETS: \$6.75-\$21.95; 874-0400

CAPSULE: Children's Theatre has pulled out all the show-biz stops in this rollicking musical fable

about friendship and adventure.

The very capable orchestra shines under the direction of conductor Anita Ruth, and all of the dance numbers, choreographed by Vance Holmes, take advantage of the talents of various cast members, humans and penguins alike. To his credit, director Jon Cranney never lets the penguins slip into entirely human behavior, and despite some delightful sight gags — penguins wearing sunglasses or carrying sno-cones — they remain animals, an important distinction in this story.

The penguins begin to pine for their frozen home, and we know they can't stay, an ending that loosed a few tears from my young companions.

As usual, the attention to detail in this CTC production is remarkable, from Mrs. Popper's sensible shoes to black-and-white newsreels featuring the penguins on parade. Jim Guenther's imaginative settings are consistently excellent, but nothing can top his opening scrims of three "National Geographic" covers, complete with the familiar yellow and oak-leaf borders.

CTC has a Broadway-caliber show in "Mr. Popper's Penguins." It's nonstop entertainment with a true heart.

'Penguins' likely to leave audiend

By Peter Vaughan/Staff Writer

"Mr. Popper's Penguins" at the Children's Theatre Company is a hodgepodge.

Tim Mason has written a bright adaptation of Richard and Florence Atwater's nutty little book about a dreamy house-painter who finds himself leading a band of performing penguins. He has also contributed snappy lyrics for the musical's dozen songs.

However, director Jon Cranney has opted for a hyperbolic, somewhat raucous staging that frequently reduces this fanciful story to cacophony and unbelievability. Composer Mel Marvin responds to Mason's lyrics with a bland collection of tunes that lack variety in style and tempo.

David Kaye Mickelson's many costumes are often pleasing reflections of the book, but the effect of his realistic penguin suits is muted by noticeable seams and zippers.

The acting ranges from Tom Dunn's bright portrayal of a somewhat addled Popper to Katherine Ferrand's overly loud Mrs. Popper. Some children act quite well, others do not. The singing is similarly varied. Vance Holmes displays an exceptionally rich and fluid voice while others barely meet the demands of the music. The performers also make frequent use of body microphones that sometimes crackle or

A review

Mr. Popper's Penguins

Who: Adapted by Timothy Mason. Lyrics by Mason and music by Mel Marvin. Directed by Jon Cranney

Where: Childrens Theatre Company, 2400 3rd Av. S., Minneapolis

When: Through Nov. 14

Tickets: \$9.25 to \$21.95. Call 874-0400

Review: While this production has its charms and features snappy lyrics by Mason, it lacks consistency and wanders aimlessly between fantasy and reality. There is hardly an aspect of it where quality isn't counterbalanced by weakness. the image on a newsreel film on opening night.

The most persistently nettling aspect of "Mr. Popper's Penguins" is its aimless wandering between the poles of fantasy and reality. Neither Cranney nor Mason seems concerned whether this stage world is real to viewers. Events follow one another with little regard for worldly time. Characters inexplicably react completely differently to such odd events as the presence of a 4-foot penguin in a living-room chair.

Much of the charm of the book derives from its ability to make an impossible situation real. One can accept its fantasy because, except for the central improbability of having a family of penguins living in one's house, everything else more six bee of v biti sev the sist per for cha sha we

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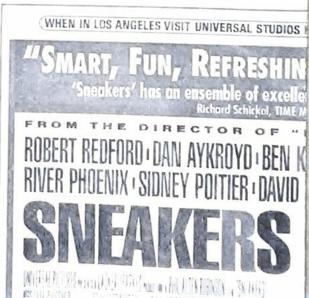
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produce unnatural cavernous sounds.

Jim Guenther's set makes good use of two-dimensional storefronts and rolling units that quickly bring the Poppers' home and town to life. But the ice and snow that envelop the house never look like anything other than foam and artificial material.

Music director Anita Ruth and her nine-piece orchestra produce a polished, smooth, solidly prepared accompaniment. On a sour note, the technical crew managed to reverse





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<u>And a Child Shall Lead Them</u> <u>Young MLK</u>

by Davida Adedjouma Music, lyrics, and arrangements by Vance Holmes

February 12 - March 7, 1999

The F. K. Weyerhaeuser Auditorium at Landmark Center Saint Paul, Minnesota

'The Boy Friend' good entertainment

by Elizabeth Young Special to the Press

Capturing the flair of the Jazz Age, Lakeshore Players' opening night of "The Boyfriend" delivered fun-filled entertainment.

A good humored story of innocent love set in 1926, underscored by witty lyrics and whimsical dance, "The Boyfriend" is a treat for all ages.

Director Phil Bratnober captured the essence of this high-spirited melodrama with subtle touches. Facial expressions, screeching adolescents, and a bit part by the police officer dashing after the hero, echo Gilbert and Sullivan. Observing these innuendos of the supporting cast tickles the audience to belly laughs.

Jane Leyden's portrayal of Polly was terrific. Quiet, demure, with the batting eyes and shy smile, Leyden's "Polly Purebred" of innocence was right on.

The hero, Tony, played by

Bob Barron, was excellent. A strong voice and accomplished dancer, he captured our hearts. In true Fred Astaire fashion (who was known for dancing with inanimate objects), Mr. Barron tap dances with a brown box as he contemplates his love for Polly. His delivery is smooth and stylishly easy, adding to the delight of the production.

Energizing the stage with each appearance, Amelia Barnes as Maisie, brought down the house. The perfect pout, whiny voice and perky flirtations made her my favorite. Spunky and high-spirited, she personified the splashy 1920's style.

The playful songs were delivered with humor and fun. The orchestra (directed by Eric Kelderman) was superb in its delivery and balance, and the choreography (by Vance Holmes) was clever and creative. Who could not enjoy songs like "You Don't Want to Play With Me Blues," delivered in Mae West style by Cynthia Elmquist, or "The Riviera" which begins, "When troubles trouble you, all you need to do is dance," accompanied by an enthusiastic dance of the Roaring 20's. The audience was magnetically drawn into this farce of frolicking fun.

Mark D. Williams' understated portrayal of the very proper Percival Browne was very good. His off-center stage antics quietly enhanced the playfulness of the scene. L.K. McCarthy was a riot as Hortense the maid. With great ease she delivered a melodramatic flair of humor for our amusement. The entire supporting cast richly enhanced the show with their obvious ability for fun. Robin McIntyre's set design was appropriately in the style of Toulouse-Lautrec, bold vet unobtrusive.

Overall, Lakeshore's production was filled with laughter, hoots and hollers; an evening of sheer entertainment.

Latino play is fascinating introduction to Calderón

By Peter Vaughan/Staff Writer

"'Life's a Dream," staged by Teatro Latino de Minnesota, is a fascinat-Ing introduction to the humanistic, well-ordered playwriting of 17thcentury Spaniard Pedro Calderón de La Barca.

The parable is a morality play on the theme that within each of us lies the capacity for tyranny and the capacity for benevolence. In director Vance Holmes' often imaginative, sometimes obscure staging, the central theme is clearly presented in an opening scene in which two young men duel with wooden staffs.

The victor, instead of slaying his adversary, offers his hand and aids the loser to his feet.

The play centers on Segismundo, a young man who has been chained since his birth because his father, the king, heeds prophacies that the son will topple him. As he nears death, the king decides to test Segismundo by freeing him and allowing him to exercise power. If he wields it wisely, he will become the ruler. If he abuses it, he will be returned to his dungeon, thinking the experience was but a dream.

A subplot involves a young woman who comes to the court seeking vengeance on a suitor who has spurned her. She, too, is offered two choices: revenge or forgiveness.

Not only is Calderón an economical

A review

Life's a Dream

Who: By Pedro Calderón de la Barca. Presented by Teatro Latino de Minnesota.

Where: Pillsbury House, 3501 Chicago Av. S., Minneapolis.

When: 8 p.m. today, Thursday, Friday, and next Saturday.

Tickets: Tickets \$8. Call 331-2257.

Review: A fascinating introduction to the humanistic, well-ordered writing of 17th-century dramatist Calderón.

playwright who lets little get in the way of his story, he is also a considerable poet. Even as translated into English, his words yield a sonority and richness of thought.

Holmes' staging speeds the complex story with the aid of eclectic musical accompaniment and an emphasis on movement.

He isn't able to clarify all the avenues in the convoluted plot, but it's a good effort that shows the play in a strong and sympathetic light.

An acting company of varying abilities Is led by Virginia Burke's commanding and alluring portrait of Rosauna, the spurned woman.

Pedro Bayon is a forceful and physically compelling Segismundo.

Strong support also comes from Alfredo Chiclana and Daniel Wick-

The production is enhanced by Mary Hansmeyer's simple but very evocative costumes and Pamela Kildahl's finely focused lighting.

Teatro Latino presents Spanish classic

by Mark Hendrix

La Vida Es Seuño Pillsbury House Theater November 1, 2; 7, 8, 9.

The English translation of La Vida Es Seufio is "Life is a dream," and Teatro Latino De Minnesota has brought this play out of its 17th century slumber at the Pillsbury House Theater.

Written in 1635 by Pedro Calderón de la Baraca during Spain's golden age, this play fuses the ancient idea that the fates and the stars controlled one's destiny and the modern idea that people are the masters of their wills.

Contempory of Shakespeare

Calderón, for those who are not completely familiar with his work, was a contemporary of Shakespeare and is held in similar regard throughout the Spanish speaking world even today. This play deals with the classic issues of its age: love, duty, honor, virtue, and fate. Characters here deal with forces of passion. It was a time when a woman's honor was worth dying for and when the position of the stars at the birth of a prince would point to the goodness or evil of his rule. Akin to Shakespearean Midsummer-Night's Dream, Calderón needs no naughty Puck to push his characters into a web of love and duty, and with a distinctly modern twist he questions the nature of morality and reality.

The plot roughly rotates around King Basilio's (J. Alfredo Panelli) decision to place his son, Segismundo (Pedro R. Bayon), in a high tower at birth because of his reading of the stars which told him that the prince would tear the land apart with civil war. The boy is raised under guard and taught by a wise old man, but never told his true identity as a prince. An older Basilio decides that his judgement

'River' overflows with talent

Lively 'Huck Finn' adaptation proves to be a surprise hit

By MARK DUNDAS WOOD

Special writer, The Oregonian

"Big River." the late Roger Miller's musical adaptation of Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," was a surprise hit on Broadway 10 years ago. It played in New York for more than two years and took home a river raft full of Tony Awards.

Now "Big River" is a surprise hit in Portland. The new rendition by The Musical Theatre Company is a treat for the ears and a tonic for the heart.

Saturday's performance had the normally sedate audience at the Eastside Performance Center hoot-



Much of the enthusiasm was for newcomer Vance Holmes as Jim, the runaway slave who accompanies Huck on his tragicomic odyssey down the Mississippi.

You might expect a larger man for this role — but what Holmes lacks in bulk he makes up in vocal passion and precision. It's worth the price of a ticket just to hear (and watch) Holmes sing.

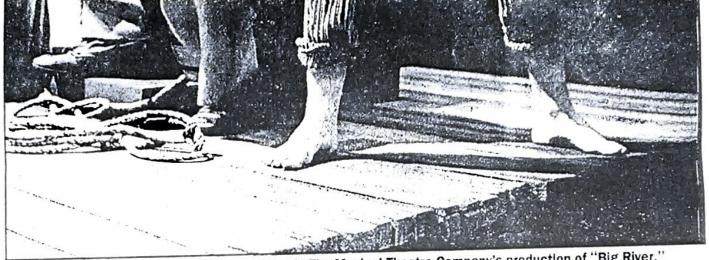
He is also a sensitive actor. When he launches into the famous scene in which Jim tells Huck about having slapped his own daughter — not realizing she's become deaf after a severe fever — it's enough to coax tears from the most cynical person in the house.

Holmes is such a strong presence that he would overwhelm his fellow performers in a lesser production. But this "Big River" is flooded with talent.

Leif Adam Norby is a perfect choice for Huck. True, he's older than Twain's pubescent hero. But Norby radiates innocence to begin with (which is why he wasn't fully believable as a gang leader in this season's "West Side Story").

Clearly, Norby understands that Huck's journey is largely an inward one — that Huck is trying to chart his own course in a world filled with fraud and cruelty.

He projects total honesty in the role and is endearingly funny throughout. When he joins forces vocally on the rollicking "Muddy Water" or the lush "River in the



Vance Holmes as Jim steers Leif Norby as Huck in The Musical Theatre Company's production of "Big River."

Rain," you're reminded of just how exciting musical theater can be.

But wait: That's not all.

Hank Cartwright is raucous and menacing as Pap Finn, especially fine in his musical tirade against the evils of "Guv'ment."

Randy Patterson and Craig Morphis demonstrate all the hucksterish comic angles as the King and the Duke (although Patterson was hampered by laryngitis at Saturday's performance). And Ryan McCluskey is a standout as Tom Sawyer — a grinning dynamo who manages to revel in his own capacity for mischief even after he's been shot in the leg.

Most of the show's big numbers are sung by men, but Rene Pearson-Nichols (as Mary Jane Wilkes) and



Big River

COMPANY: Musical Theatre Company

WHERE: Eastside Performance Center, 531 S.E. 14th Ave.
WHEN: 8 p.m.Fridays-Saturdays, 2 p.m. Sundays, through April 9
TICKETS: \$12-\$19 (280-6592)

Linda Brown have a couple of satisfying solo turns. The ever-amusing Kathy Philpott is on hand in a couple of supporting roles.

Musical director Richard Bower leads a small orchestra that deals deftly with Miller's grab bag of mu-

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sical styles — gospel, country, hillbilly, jazz.

Director Michael Jones and set designer Carey Wong keep the movingraft scenes unobtrusive and believable. This is not a show where spectacle predominates. Instead, it uses scenic backdrops while the rhythms and harmonies — and Twain's classic story — take center stage.

Like Twain's novel, "Big River" contains scenes depicting alcoholism, child abuse, greed and racism. And the word "nigger," which gets "Huckleberry Finn" banned in wellmeaning but misguided school districts, is spoken repeatedly.

No, "Big River" is not always a conventionally "happy" musical. But as Huck would put it, it does offer "considerable joy."