

Review

From Slapstick to Corn

By DEX HUTCHINS
Collegian Reviewer

The Agatha Christie thriller "Witness for the Prosecution," a Penn State Player production now at Schwab Auditorium, hops — through the efforts of a generally mediocre cast — from slapstick to plain corn in scenes which could only take place in a Kangaroo court.

Directed by Walter H. Walters, head of the department of theatre arts, the production is saved from total collapse by magnificent performances by Warren Burns and Joanne Beegle.

MRS. BEEGLE, as Romain, the "wife" of Leonard Vole, an accused murderer, is outstanding as a mysterious woman who seeks to send her husband to the gallows. Mrs. Beegle expresses the many subtleties of her role through carefully controlled speech inflection which makes hers the most fascinating personality in the play.

Lively Warren Burns as Sir

Wilfrid Roberts, counsel for the defense, holds the audience in his grip as a clever comedian who, when called upon, can interject a dramatic undertone into his portrayal.

John Whitesell, as Leonard Vole, a poor young Englishman accused of murdering a rich old lady, self-consciously grins his way through his part leaving the audience devoid of sympathy for his character.

DAVID ARMBRUSTER, a solicitor, takes the audience back to another century with his mechanical methods of expressing emotional feeling. His forced and artificial histrionics are at least a distraction in his scenes.

All the actors in this play are

handicapped by the worst make-up job seen on the University stage this year. The characters are bedecked in such a motley array of hues as seemingly to appear on one hand in high fever — or on the other posthumously.

Highlighting the shortcomings of cast and acting talent are realistic sets cleverly designed by William Allison. In a sense Allison's talented handiwork is a detriment to the play as its somber realism makes the stumbling characters stand out even more fully in comic relief.

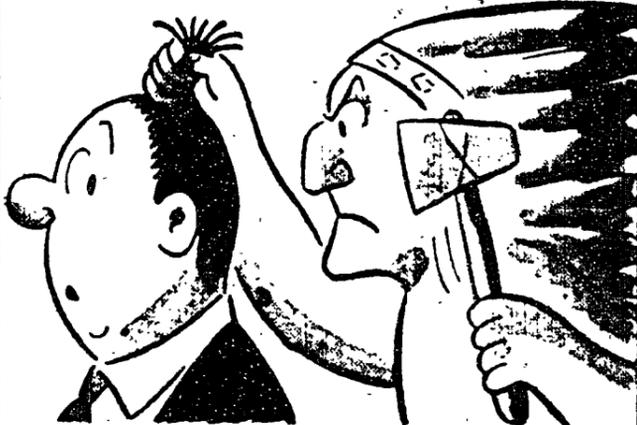
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