

Collegian arts

'Night Music': one large flaw

By TOM MARCINKO
Collegian Staff Writer

Watching last night's Playhouse performance of "A Little Night Music" by the Festival Theatre was frustrating. It was just fair, but it could have been really great. It was marred by one big problem.

Stephen Sondheim's musical, based on Ingmar Bergman's film "Smiles of a Summer Night," won six Tony awards when it played on Broadway in 1973. Like most musicals, the plot is absurd, something to hang the songs on.

play review

"Night Music" is your basic story of love and infidelity. Elderly Fredrik Egerman (Marshall Borden) has been married to 18-year-old Anne (Kathleen McGrath) for 11 months. She's still a virgin, a condition I find difficult to accept.

So does poor Fred, and he's soon in the arms of his former lover, the famous actress Desiree (Tanny McDonald). But Desiree has a lover, and

for the most part the acting is good, and Borden and McDonald are an excellent leading couple. Paul Farin is amusing as Count Carl-Magnus, Desiree's dashing, fiery and brainless lover.

McGrath is suitably vapid as Anne. As Henrik, the uptight divinity student, John Suggs exaggerates most of his big scenes, but he does deliver the play's best line beautifully: "We have sinned — and it was a complete failure!"

Nothing irreparably wrong with the acting, then. The singing? Fine, for the most part. McDonald has a fine voice and does justice to the strangely haunting "Send in the Clowns." Patricia Ann McKay is especially good with her one number, "The Miller's Son."

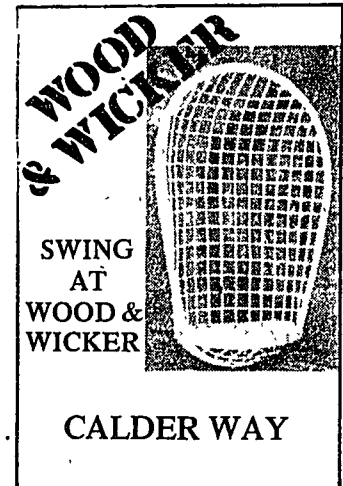
Director Garland Wright seems to have things under control. He employs a number of interesting stage tricks, such as having actors stand still when they're not supposed to be hearing other actors bare their souls in words or song. (These people excel at standing still, too). It was also amusing to watch the props slither across the stage, seemingly by themselves.

The big problem with "A Little Night Music" was that I could hardly hear the damned thing. The orchestra, directed by Bruce Trinkley, drowned out half the lines in the songs and much of the spoken dialogue.

I don't know why. Except for Suggs and Dee Victor, most of the actors have strong singing voices. I didn't think the orchestra played too loudly. It might have been the Playhouse acoustics, or perhaps I just had a bad seat.

A friend I spoke to during intermission, who saw the play performed elsewhere, assured me that Hugh Wheeler's dialogue and Sondheim's lyrics were incredibly clever. What I managed to catch confirmed that (sometimes), and I just wish the sound had been better. I listened hard.

"A Little Night Music" plays from tonight to July 10, 12-17, 19-23 with a July 16 matinee.



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Brooks' 'Frankenstein' in return engagement

"Young Frankenstein," Mel Brooks' 1975 takeoff on old horror films, lacks the surrealistic insanity of Woody Allen or the inspired silliness of Monty Python, and by cleaning up the vulgarity of "Blazing Saddles" Brooks himself loses something, but what the hell. It's funny anyway. With Marty Feldman, Madeline Kahn, and Peter Boyle (The Movies).

and variety, here is a note about "Star Wars": The word "parsec," a measure of astronomical distance, is incorrectly used to indicate time. With that out of the way, it can be said that George Lucas' hybrid of "Flash Gordon" and "2001" is the most entertaining film to come along in years ("The Garden"). "The Deep" is a good suspense film, but not a great one. Nick Nolte can't act and Jacqueline Bisset and

Robert Shaw are adequate, but the main attraction is the underwater photography and a few well-timed scares (The State).

movie review

Director John Boorman, the Philadelphia Inquirer reports, made some major changes in "Exorcist II: The Heretic." It's not clear which version is playing at

Cinema One, but John Simon puts it well: "There is a very strong probability that 'Exorcist II' is the stupidest major movie ever made." Other turkeys in town include "The Other Side of Midnight," an improbable revenge melodrama (The Screening Room), and "A Bridge Too Far," a bloated war flick with cameo roles by Gene Hackman, Robert Redford, Liv Ullman, Ryan O'Neal, and lots of other Big Names.

"2001: A Space Odyssey," Stanley Kubrick's masterpiece, remains one of the finest science fiction films of all time. Its age is beginning to show in the amount of time Kubrick spends showing off space hardware (Kubrick's shoulders, can take for granted), but it's a lot more substantial than "Star Wars" (East Halls).

—by Tom Marcinko

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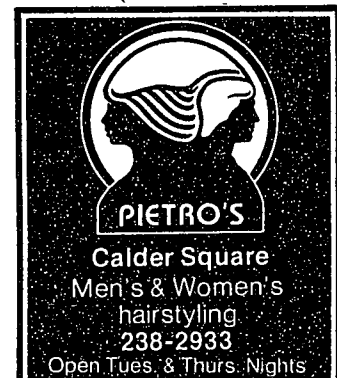


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