

Photos by Joe Tori



Playwright's theatre in Pavilion 'A wife deals with transvestism

By JANET MAZUR
Daily Collegian Staff Writer

Ever wondered how the wife of a transvestite copes with her husband's habit of donning women's clothing? Howard Motyl (13th-English writing) not only wondered about it, but chose to explore this offbeat topic in his play "Other People," which makes its 5 o'clock Theatre debut today in the Pavilion.

After reading an article in "New Times" which dealt with the problems faced by the wives of transvestites, Motyl became interested in the subject. He later used it as the basis for "Other People" which he wrote last term in Theatre 240, elementary playwriting.

Motyl describes "Other People" as essentially, "a love story" though not a "romance." He added however, that ultimately, it's about "communication." "Originally the action focused on the wife's feelings and point of view, though now it's more about the transvestite's, Michael's, exposing himself to his wife," Motyl said.

Being able to revise a play is inherent in 5 o'clock productions. Frank Alamia (grad-theatre), director of "Other People" explains the reason behind this idea.

"The object is for the playwright to see his play in production and to improve it. Howard's re-written this three times."

Alamia says that there's "excitement" found in being able to "mold" the production on the spot.

"Usually I'll say, Howard, we need a line here and he'll supply one. Sometimes we don't agree, but it always works out," Alamia said.

In order to assure that "Other People" accurately depicts transvestites, Alamia obtained first hand information from the International Association for Male Feminism.

"I felt a responsibility to have it accurate. I didn't want to give out misinformation," Alamia said.

Through this organization, Alamia learned that a transvestite is, "someone who's 'normal' in every way but likes to wear women's clothing."

"Other People" deals with one couple's attempt to integrate transvestism into their marriage.

The transvestite, Michael, is portrayed by Glen Holtzer, while his wife, Patty, is portrayed by Susan Chambers (grad-theatre).

According to Alamia, the dramatic action revolves around Michael's desire for his wife to join him at a party in which he dresses in drag.

"Other People" is titled as such for two reasons, Motyl said. "Things like transvestism always happen to 'other people.' Also, the fact that there's another 'person' behind everyone" he said.

Already, Motyl has begun working on another play. Set in a supermarket, the main characters are two cashiers, while customers who pass through the check-out line comprise the rest of the cast. So far, he's completed one scene.

"Other People" runs through Friday. Admission is free.

In the Playhouse, 19th century operetta appealing



Jim Caldwell, left, and Jonathan Dewberry are two of the lead characters in University Theatre's "H.M.S. Pinafore."

By ANNE CLIFFORD
Daily Collegian Staff Writer

University Theatre's "H.M.S. Pinafore, or the Lass that Loved a Sailor," is a contemporary production of this Gilbert and Sullivan operetta that dates back to May 25, 1878, when it was first performed at England's Savoy Opera House.

The operetta, now at the Playhouse through Saturday, is a fanciful satire of the British Navy and a tale of love between a captain's daughter and a common sailor. Since its debut in 1878, the operetta is especially noted for its wild success in the United States.

In Great Britain, "Pinafore" originally ran for 700 performances. According to Peter Kline, founder of the Lyric Theatre Company and a director, producer and actor in all 14 Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, "All over London people were whistling, 'I'm Called Little Buttercup,'" and "He polished up the

handle of the big front door," and "Pinafore" suddenly became a national craze."

Kline says it was almost necessary to enact legislation to prevent people from saying, "What, never? — Well, hardly ever," an often repeated phrase in the operetta.

Before Gilbert and Sullivan even brought "Pinafore" to the United States, pirated performances were being produced throughout the country. Some estimates place the number of these performances at 160 per night, with no compensation to the authors.

Helen Manfull, director of the University Theatre production, says the "Pinafore" craze manifested itself in laundry soap, cocoa mugs, thread, cigars, corsets, games, celery vases and a Currier and Ives series.

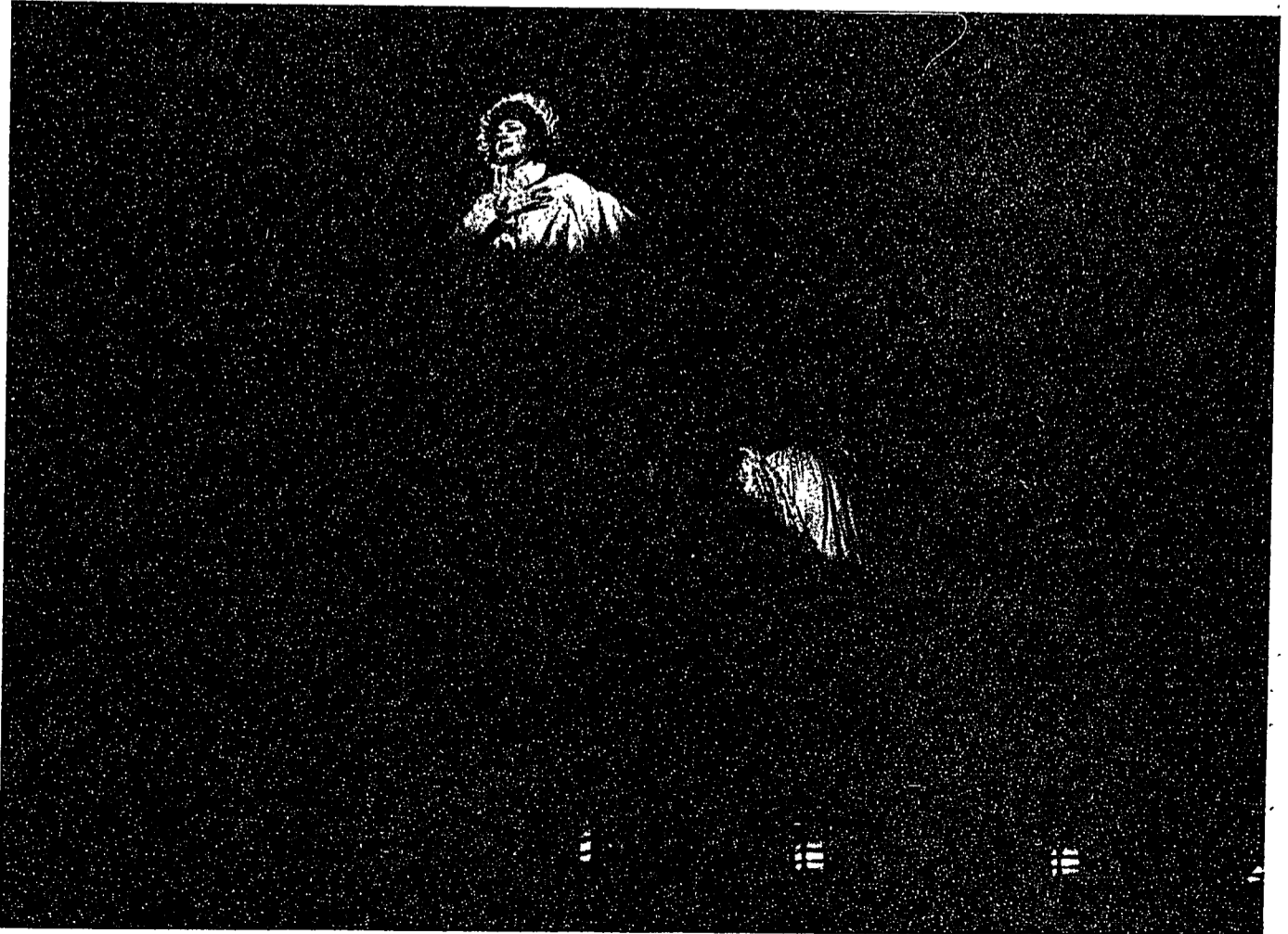
"Pinafore" continues to be a popular production, one of the most recent being part of a Gilbert and Sullivan festival in

late January at the Light Opera of Manhattan. Why does this century-old musical satire and the other Gilbert and Sullivan operettas continue to attract audiences? Robert F. Trehy, professor of music, attributes it to the skill of the artistic team — W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan.

"The book and the lyrics by W. S. Gilbert are absolutely marvelous," he said.

"The whole satire on Italian opera is very funny." The musical satire is "a scream for a musician," and for knowledgeable audiences, he says.

Gerald M. Phillips, a professor of speech who has studied the humor of the late nineteenth century, says he considers the general wit of Gilbert and Sullivan operettas to be timeless. "What they did was one of the rare things in the theatre done purely for fun," without any deep psychological meanings, he says.



Josephine (Suzanne Murphy) is the daughter of the captain of the H.M.S. Pinafore. She is torn between upper class honor and her love for a lowly seaman.

Photos by Lynn Dudinsky