

arts

Boop-Boopee-do! 'Boy Friend' is a smashing success

By HEIDI BEELER
Collegian Staff Writer

Live theater was probably never so lively as it was at the Festival Theatre's production of "The Boy Friend" Saturday night.

A spoof on the musicals of the '20s, Sandy Wilson's "The Boy Friend" came complete with giggling girls boop-boopee-doing, a guitar strumming banjo-like chords, muted trumpets and slide trombones, sequined costumes and straw hats, kick-lines, soft shoe numbers, corny jokes, and a plot melodramatic enough to run "General Hospital" off the air.

The audience loved it!

Set in the '20s French Riviera, the play revolves around the girls at Mme. Dubonnet's finishing school. It's carnival time when the play opens, and while all the girls and their beaus prepare for the masquerade ball, romantic heroine Polly Browne (played by student Chris Sperry) languishes over her tragic lack of a date. Then Tony the messenger (equity actor Tim Barber), clad in a red uniform with gold trim, brass buttons, and taps on his shoes, arrives with her costume. Of course he's handsome, and of course, they fall in love at first sight. And of course, their love is momentarily doomed, because he comes from a lower class.

Meanwhile, Polly's father arrives at the school for a visit. A staid British millionaire, Percival Browne (equity actor James LeVaghi) is embarrassed to discover that Mme. Dubonnet is none other than "Kiki," a war-time love from his past. Now Kiki must cure Percy of being "how you say — a damp blanket." And the chorus sings, flirts, and dances, as the two leading couples sort out their romantic differences. ("They manage these things so much better in France!")

The acting style played up the corniness of the plot. The actors directed stylized lines and gestures directly to the audience, rather than at each other. The chorus members spoke, sighed and stomped in unison (much the same way the crowd in Monty Python's "Life of Brian" chanted "we are all individuals" in unison). And the leads behaved more like cartoon characters than real people.

Mme. Dubonnet's character was set with her

first entrance. As Pulliam walked on stage, laughing and strewing roses about the stage, the lights dimmed, a spot-light cleared her way, and the orchestra hit a melodic line. It seemed certain she would start a song. But no, the lights just came up, and she went on with her scene.

Pulliam was wonderful as the theatrical, fun-loving Mme. Dubonnet. Her singing was strong, her French accent both authentic-sounding and comfortable, and her sweeping entrances and love for the spotlight funny.

Tim Barber was perfect as Tony, the heroic and melodramatic lover. Even as he spoke, Barber's voice had a sing-song quality to it that reminded me of Dudley Do-Right. You could see the director pulling the strings in every one of his sharp, stylized movements. He never just walked across the stage, but paraded in a dance step. And he sang a strong "I Could Be Happy With You."

Theatre review

Sperry's voice was clear and ringing as she sang the love theme with Tony and broke into Mme. Dubonnet's (much to Dubonnet's dismay) spotlight with the descendant in "Poor Little Pierrette." Her acting of the shy, rati-fied, melancholy Polly was good, although next to Barber's sharply stylized movements, she could have exaggerated her actions more.

Percival Browne's rigid sense of respectability could be seen as LeVaghi's march on stage, stomping his feet together before making each 90-degree turn and brandishing a riding crop. LeVaghi also brought out Percival's embarrassment every time he was caught almost enjoying himself with Mme. Dubonnet. Yet, his flustered pomp could have been more exaggerated too. He seemed a little too much like a "real" person next to all of the caricature-like characters. And the audience members seemed as though they were afraid to laugh at him.

The audience roared at Susan Michalovich's

version of the squealing dumb-blonde, Dulcie, and at Jim Caldwell's portrayal of Lord Brookhurst, the dirty old man of the play.

"Choreographed by director Darwin Knight, the dance numbers were energetic and varied. Todd Taylor and Catherine Dupuis danced a high-kicking, fast-paced Charleston to "Won't You Charleston with Me?" that had the audience wildly applauding. Mark Conly and Leigh J. Melander danced a Spanish tango (bringing Tom Lehrer's "Massachusetts Tango" to mind) as they exaggerated the sharpness of the style and ended up throwing each other around the stage and beating on each other. Barber tap-danced for Sperry, as she whistled the melody of "I Could Be Happy With You" for him.

The costumes, designed by multi-award-winning Susan Tsu, really added color to the performance. The pink turban and black velvet bathing suit of Mme. Dubonnet, poorly-tailored and striped dress of Polly, and the baggy knickers and argyle socks of the flirtatious old Englishman Lord Brookhurst, were not only funny, but also exaggerated the personalities of the characters. The sequined, satiny costumes for the masquerade ball were spectacular.

The chorus was well-balanced, both in their singing and dancing, although Taylor, an equity actor, occasionally stood out as a better dancer. The orchestra, directed by Bruce Trinkle, was professional-sounding and didn't overpower the actors.

The set, designed by Charles M. Caldwell, was constructed of flats set up at different depths to give it perspective and added to the play's non-realistic quality. And the lighting, designed by Richard Moore, with its over 400 cues (150 is about the average) was blatantly used to set the mood. For example, every time Barber and Sperry sang "I Could Be Happy With You," the sky would darken and a romantic moon appeared, no matter what time of day the action was set in.

The production runs through July 10 with performances at 7:30 p.m. on Sundays and at 8:00 p.m. on Tuesdays through Saturdays.

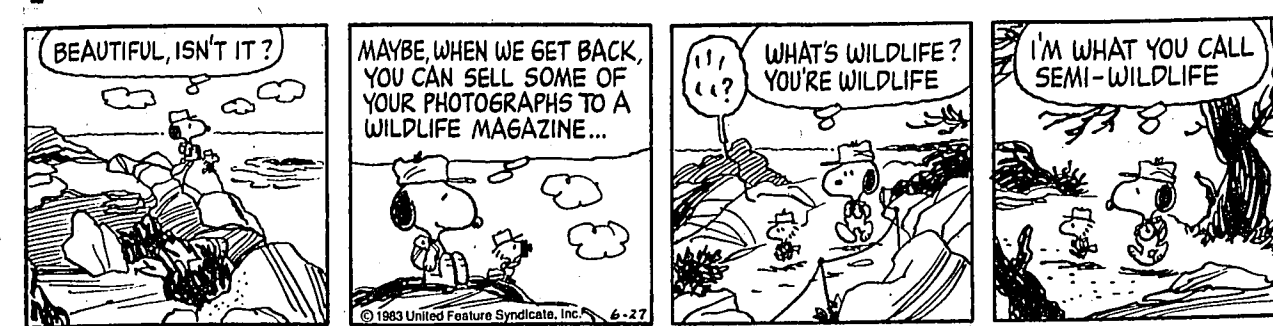


Cast members of the Festival Theatre's production of "The Boy Friend" (starting front and clockwise) include Chris Sperry as Polly, Tim Barber as Tony, Catherine Dupuis as Dulcie, and Todd Taylor as Bobby. The production runs through July 10 in the Playhouse Theatre.

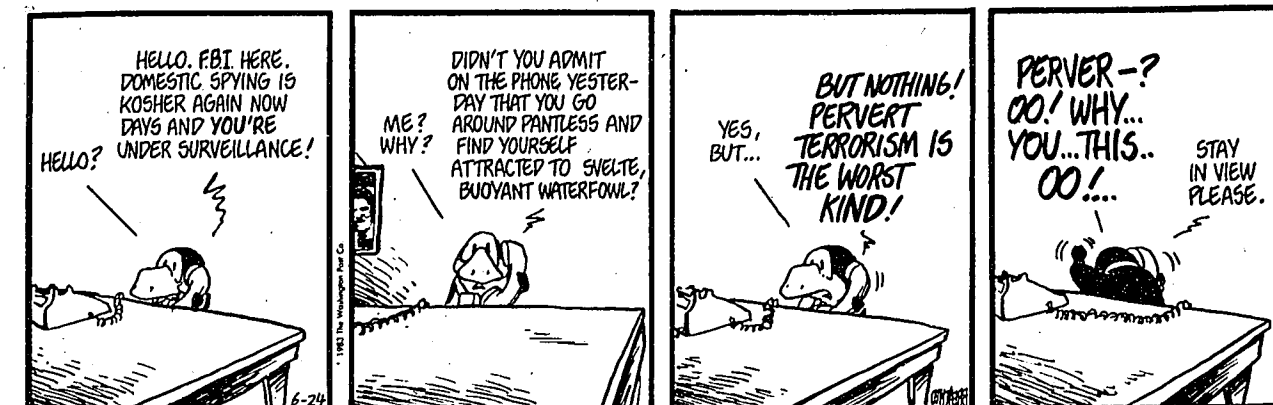
comics, etc.

11
The Daily Collegian
Monday, June 27, 1983

peanuts



bloom county



biff & al



Across

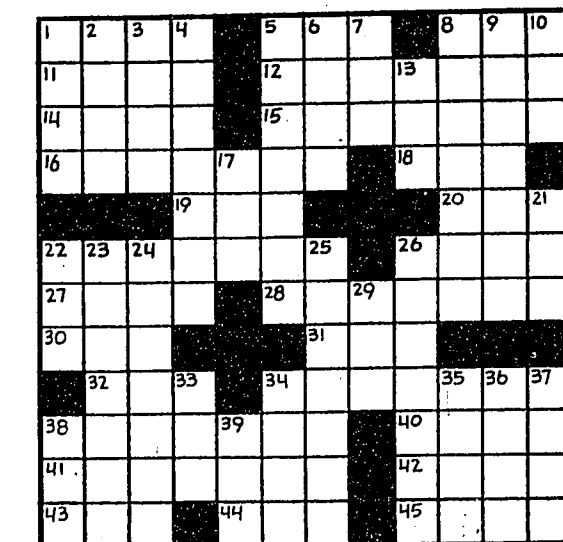
- 1 Judge's seat
- 2 Rightful
- 3 Choose
- 4 Battle cry: Irish
- 5 Uplift
- 6 Forsaken
- 7 Crab
- 8 Chinese citron
- 9 Skull
- 10 Eskimo knife
- 11 Leaven
- 12 Distributed cards again
- 13 Spanish painter
- 14 Vainly
- 15 Gobbler
- 16 Billfish
- 17 Kind of grass
- 18 Mine
- 19 Bung
- 20 Subdued
- 21 Gorged
- 22 Gladiolus
- 23 Channel
- 24 I do
- 25 Clivet and Puma

Down

- 1 Sky
- 2 Father: Hebrew
- 3 Median
- 4 Master
- 5 Flaw
- 6 Single thing
- 7 Complete
- 8 Person in debt to another
- 9 Absolute
- 10 Three: prefix
- 11 Laughable
- 12 Gums
- 13 Saints: abbr.
- 14 Tormant
- 15 Slippery
- 16 Reduced in value
- 17 Tortoise
- 18 Zebu
- 19 Coffee
- 20 For each
- 21 Saturate
- 22 Brazilian rubber
- 23 Reek
- 24 Radicals
- 25 Tennis stroke
- 26 Moonbeam

Crossword

(answers in Tuesday's classifieds)



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