College theater upbeat musical carries message

By BARBARA MICHALS

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As its name implies, "Celebration" is a happy show, one that lifts your spirits and makes you feel good to be alive. The current production by Oakland University's Department of Music is throughly entertaining and showcases; fine student talents. "Celebration" is a musical fable which combines upbeat, lively tunes with stylized, ritual drama and a good dose of comedy. The message gets in musical fable which combines upbeat, lively tunes murky at times if one tries to scrutin' ize it too closely. Basically the play affirms the power of good over evil, affle over death, love over bitterness, optimism over despair.

All four principal players do commendable work and are backed up by an exceptionally well-polished chorus that functions as an integral part of the story.

Todd Heuphers successfully projects is

an exceptionary wein-poisined chorus hat functions as an integral part of the story. And the subjects successfully projects in the youthful innecence and eternal optimism of Orphan. Having been turned out of the fully garden of his orphanage when the place was bought by heartless Edgar Allen Rich. Orphan sets out to stir Rich's long dormant mentions and gain permission to live in the garden again.

Orphan is Everymana, beset by temptations along the road of life. He is Faith, Virtue, Purity, and Regeneration. He is also Adam, cast out of the Garden of Eden to become an orphan in the storm.

Heughens voice is clear and appealing in musical numbers such as "My Garden," "Love Song" and "Tro Glad to See You've Got What You Want."

AS RICH, John Thomas is a delight-ful comic. He uses his expressive face to full advantage despite the dreadful make-up used to age him. He particu-larly shines when cavorting through

the number "It's You Who Makes Me Young," while a team of beauticians and bodybuilders take on an impossible task.

In the final climactic struggle between Orphan and Rich, it's awfully hard to take the symbolism seriously when Thomas is dressed in a fig leaf over a panty girdle over a union suit. Like the play as a whole, this scene is great fun and not worth pondering. Juli Tomas is appropriately wistful as Angel, the young girl who is tempted to sell herself to Rich in exchange for making her show business dreams come true. Her strong, pleasant voice blends nicely with Heughens' in some fine duets and ensemble songs. Sever Hale is well-cast as Potenkin, pand part manipulator. His character is best defined in the musical numbers "Survive" and "Not My Problem."

Steve Rivers deserves plaudits for the smooth stage direction and excellent choreography. Under musical director Sally Albrecht, the three-piece orchestra functions effectively.

While the principals are all costumed appropriately, the chorus looks more raging than encessary. The odd-sized bits and pieces of material they drape on themselves look more seedy than creative.

"Celebration" was written by the

on themselves look more seedy than creative.
"Celebration" was written by the words-and-music team of Tom Jona and Harvey Schmidt, the same two who turned out the highy successful "T Do! I Do!" and "The Fantasticks." While the musical numbers in "Celebration" are every bit as good, the play simply does not make as coherent a statement as its needee-scans."

not make as conerent a statement as its predecessors. Performances of "Celebration" con-tinue in the Studio Theater of Varner Hall at 8:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. The concluding performance is at 2:30 p.m. Sunday.

Play depicts Africa

African playwright Wole Soyinka's
"The Lion and the Jewel!" will open the
1970-80 University of Michigan Showcase Season Oct. 31-Nov. 3 in Trueblood Theatre.
The Nigerian born playwright is considered one of the most popular African playwrights in his homeland and in
the United States. He has just finished
directing the American premiere of his
play "Death and the King's Horseman"
for the opening production of the Goodnan Theatre season in Chicago.
The play is about the courtship of a
young village maiden by the village
chief and a young westernized school

young, """

chief and a young westernized school teacher. Music, dance, mime, ritual and the multitude of colors inherent in the playwright's tribal background are in-corporated into the production. Directing the play is Janice Reid, a doctoral student in theater, who is teaching a course in black drama. She has appeared in numerous productions at the U-M, including "Much Ado About Nothing." "Wedding Band," and "The Creat White Pout of the multiple demands of the play's tribal music and dance, Lary Ham, choreographer, and assistant di-

rector. Duke Atano Csima, who just moved to Ann Arbor from Nigeria, are working closely with Ms. Reid.

State of the State

Cast thrilled by response

"The response to our show is over-whelming. The other night they had to turn people away at the door," said Greg Tatum, one half of the cast of "Good Evening."

The hit comedy is currently playing at Mr. Mac's Stable in Dearborn. "We expected some nice audiences," said Tatum, "but this is really something. It's fantastic."

"The critics have been unanimous in their praise of the show," said Del Howison, the other half of the cast. "We are stretching the bounds of dinner theater just a little bit with this away. It's more offbeat than the usual musical comedy sappy stuff.
"The way is starting to be prepared for the time when 'real' shows will be performed in dinner theater."

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