

Buddy Rich, Mel Torme team for dynamite night

By MARK E. GALLO

near-capacity crowd of jazz aficionados.

The Meadow Brook Music Festival's Jazz Series at Oakland University's Baldwin Pavilion has finally come to a full booming bloom.

Friday night's dynamic pairing of drumming legend Buddy Rich and his 14-piece band with one of the world's foremost male jazz/pop vocalists, Mel Torme, conspired with a splendidly balmy summer evening to bring out a

Without a trace of the more scholastic commercial elements rampant in the jazz world these days, this was a full-course meal of tasty jazz of the highest caliber.

Rich's band is one of the tightest, most energetic and enthusiastic organizations in the world, with an average age that hovers around 30.

In the ranks were such stalwart vet-

erans as arranger and tenor saxman Sal Nistico and the great Steve Marcus, also on tenor saxophone. The band was a hotwire that burned from the opening note and got progressively hotter.

TORME'S SECOND set entrance was punctuated by the celebrated Rich-Torme jibes.

Rich: "This is an old friend of mine. I should say we've been friends for a long time. He doesn't like being called

old, but he is very, very old."

Torme: "It's wonderful to be introduced by Victor Venom, a legend in his own mind."

Buddy Rich is, simply, one of the best drummers in the world. He has a sad habit of being the first to admit that himself, but there's no denying his virtuosity. He's a dervish on cymbals, rings, symbol stands and even stick-on-stick. His percussive precision is as re-

flective as waking up is for the rest of the world.

Torme has a beautifully lush voice that combines the best of Tony Bennett and Ella Fitzgerald. Together Rich and Torme create a clockwork mesh of totally professional precision.

ON THIS NIGHT everyone was in top-notch form. It must have been a particularly hot night for the band. If they worked like that every night they'd drop from exhaustion.

Torme's set featured "Flyin' High," "Send in the Clowns," and a beautifully sensuous "Round Midnight" before he started opening all the way up. The Johnny Mercer/Harold Arlen classic "Blues in the Night" was probably given its most unusual reading here of Marty Paiche's arrangement from the new Rich-Torme LP "Together Again

for the First Time," album selections were featured for the remainder of the evening.

At one point in "Blues . . ." Torme's only accompaniment was from a solo trombone.

Torme's admiration for Ella Fitzgerald was made apparent in his handling of "When Sunny Gets Blue," "Bluesette," with some very good scat work, and a melody of "Here's That Rainy Day" and "Fanny."

"Lady Be Good" was transformed into "Elia Be Good" and broke into a few other pieces of songs along the way (Eddie Jefferson's version of "Sister Sadie," among others). This was a "Grand Finale" in the truest jazz tradition, with Torme and Rich trading fours at frenzied pace, Buddy on everything his sticks could find and Mel scatting away a mile-a-minute.

Play is simply, delightfully absurd

By JEFF SCHORR

Although it is called the Wayne State University Summer Theatre Festival, it's not second-rate, summer rerun fare.

The Hilbert Repertory Company selects from among its brightest stars to play Alan Ayckbourn's "Absurd Person Singular" an appropriately smashing rendition, in the three-act production which closes after 8:30 p.m. performance Thursday and Friday, July 12 and 13, on campus in Detroit.

Ayckbourn's lines and jokes at the (British) social structure remind easily of Neil Simon. The Ayckbourn dialogue is interpreted by six of the repertory's best, under the direction of Robert Emmett McGill.

The English social structure has evolved in recent years from a rather

rigid class system to one more representative of changing conditions in contemporary England. It's ripe for the satire of Ayckbourn, under the guise of a light-handed Simon.

THREE COUPLES — who make up the entire cast — are seen on three successive Christmas holidays. Each couple has a less-than-ideal relationship, as they jockey to attain, retain or save face in the ever-changing social pecking order. Two men are architects and one is an influential banker — at first.

The three couples include Jane and Sidney (Barbara Acker and Richard Gustin), Ronald and Marion (Buckner Gibbs and Dianne Winslow) and Eva and Geoffrey (Kristie Reeves-Beauchamp and Mark Robbins).

Perhaps the most enjoyable couple, from an energy standpoint, are Jane

and Sidney, the couple on the way up. Barbara Acker is especially winsome in a Lucille Ball slapstick role. She managed to parody small forgetfulnesses into small tragedies.

She is aided by her griggish, smug husband who berates her while trying to entertain guests. Tony Randall would have a difficult time doing this husband role better. Dick Gustin is the perfect, well-tailored opposite to his winning wife.

BUCKNER GIBBS is, perhaps, one of the most thoroughly natural and relaxed actors the company has. Nothing is ever forced. He becomes, particularly in the second act, a foil to his neurotic wife who can't cope with his "modern" lifestyle.

Further slapstick entertainment heightens the second act when Marion

— without saying a word throughout the entire act — attempts to commit suicide in several ways. The rest of the cast assumes she is merely feeling ill and tries to tidy up the house with total ineptness.

The final scene has a bitter ending despite the humor. It shows the downfall of Eva, a haughty, class-conscious grand dame who now hides her sorrow in alcohol. Her upper class, above-it-all husband Geoffrey (the aristocratic, Rex Harrison role is played with skill), falls with attempted but less than face-saving grace. The now-risen Jane and Sidney show no class at all and no compassion for their changed social standing.

There are many laughs along the way in this behavioral study of modern-day English couples in the well-named production.

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