

After watching Peggy, you know that's all there is

Local critics seldom knock community theater. After all, amateur players who opt for a taste of show biz, minus the big bucks, deserve rave notices for just being gutsy. Brickbats are reserved for big name stars when they bomb. Look out. Here come the brickbats.

There's plenty of good community theater in the area and the price is right. So it's disappointing to shell out \$11 for a "professional" show with a top star who'd get the going after performing two minutes on amateur night.

I'm talking about Peggy Lee in "Side By Side By Sundheim" at the Birmingham Theatre. It opened June 20 and I saw it June 22. As I'm writing this column on June 25, I still haven't seen a single review of the show in any metropolitan daily. So I went to the show uninformed and I blew 11 bucks.

Peggy Lee generates as much excitement as someone tap dancing in stocking feet to the sound of one hand clapping. Besides that, she's more than a bit on the fleshy side and even her bejeweled and befringed tunics and gowns in peach and gray

couldn't hide her ample middle. Neither could she hide the fact that her voice is fading along with her talent.

OK, so she looks as though she had a few face lifts and her eyes are slits which slant upward. But what really bothers me is her complete lack of enthusiasm and memory. She slouched back in a comfy chair, read a script about Stephen Sundheim and his music, kept losing her place and often forgot to stand up and sing on cue.

In the first act, she grabbed a boa and lifted herself from her chair to sing "Ah, Paree," from "Folies" with a French accent. Pianista Ellen La Grange and Paul Horner looked horrified. Ms. Lee soon realized she wasn't on cue. So, she slouched back in her chair and stuck the boa between her teeth for comic relief.

Speaking of relief, the only thing that saved the show from complete disaster was a cast of lively young singers who did most the work. One male



Jackie Klein
singer's voice cracked and he screwed up a line of a song. But the crowd gave more applause than Ms. Lee, who sat there looking bored, clapping with one hand.

All I could think of was this bigtime star singing, "Is that all there is?" Peggy Lee was being Peggy Lee and that, my friends, is definitely all there is. It's a case of someone famous for being famous.

Ms. Lee's biggest goof came at the end of the show. After the finale, when members of the cast took their bows during one curtain call, the audience began to leave. Suddenly, the star reappeared on the stage. She sang the best number of the show

which she had apparently forgotten to do — "Send in the Clowns." They were already there.

IT'S HARD to believe this is the same singer who recorded nearly 600 songs, some of them gold records, through the eras of jazz, blues, swing, Latin music and rock. She's supposed to have a string of awards unequalled by any pop singer alive.

Critics have dubbed her "a living legend" and "an American tradition." She should have quit while she was still living and a legend.

I used to love Peggy Lee's deadpan style in songs like "Manana," "Lover," "Fever" and "Why Don't You Do Right?" But, Peggy, you sure didn't do right with your sloppy, disorganized performance in the sloppy, disorganized production of "Side By Side By Sundheim."

Ms. Lee is considering doing the show on Broadway. Unless she and the comedy of errors shape up, Peggy Lee may be laughed right off the stage, side-by-side with Sundheim.

from our readers

Student was correct in speaking out on discipline

Editor:
I wholeheartedly support you in your editorial of June 19th. Tom Steuber, recent North Farmington graduate, deserves our applause for taking a stand.

And for doing so on an issue that has too long been a problem in the Farmington school system.

I cite the following as a specific example of what Tom is talking about. As an 18-year resident of the area, I attended Farmington schools for 13 years. In that time, I have seen a definite trend among students, parents, and

administration. Too many students are no longer the young adults they are supposed to be, but rather a generation of undisciplined children who have no regard for property, public or private, or the rights of others.

Evidence of this is the \$24,000 price tag for vandalism to the high schools this year. By far, the major cause of this irresponsibility on the part of students is that too many parents fail at home to instill the needed responsibility. Certainly some parents must have wondered what their children were

doing out at three or four in the morning the night that students caused \$3,000 damage to North Farmington High school. Why then did teachers at North threaten a boycott to gain restitution from those students?

But parents aren't the only ones to blame for the lack of discipline in the schools today. Far too often, school administrators turn the other cheek to problem students, and fail to take appropriate measures to punish them.

In point of fact, I refer once again to the damage done at North. Not only did the administration fail to take strong disciplinary action against the students, but the faculty of North had to threaten a boycott of graduation ceremonies in order to gain restitution from the students.

When the faculty took this action, they were totally unsupported by the administration, both at North and at the board of education.

Such a situation is ludicrous.

Instead, the faculty should not have had to make such a move. The boycott should have been proposed, and participated in, by the administration of North, and the administration at the central office.

That it should fall on the faculty's shoulders is preposterous.

The attempts of administrators to denounce Tom Steuber for his commencement speech is further evidence of their closed-eye attitude. Today's students who do have some responsibility in their heads are now being urged to take up a similar look-but-don't-see attitude.

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North president lauded

Editor:
Just had to write and tell you how much I enjoyed Steve Barnaby's comment in last week's paper about Tom Steuber.

My heart really went out to him. He must be a very caring young man and his parents must be very proud of him. It was unbelievable to me that so many could criticize him. I feel just as you do that too many graduation speeches are a bore and have little true meaning or sincerity and I have attended four of my children's so far.

I truly wish I could have attended that graduation. It would have been

like a breath of spring in a stale world. Friends of mine who did attend said an "adult" yelled "Cut out the bull — and sit down." That is a typical remark from someone in a generation who has no intelligent remark to make.

Keep up the good work, Steve. You made my day. I only hope Tom held his chin up through all this. He will be the winner in the end. It was wonderful to hear someone had something worthwhile to say. Too bad it fell on so many deaf ears.

MRS. JOSEPH RYAN,
Farmington Hills

The 415 graduating seniors have contempt for their teachers, the system, their government and their country. They are all pampered suburbanites caught up with material possessions. They are malcontents.

Not in my book. I was afforded the opportunity of viewing them firsthand when I assisted them with their after-graduation party held at school. The complete details were organized in a week not by me, I only counted noses and doled out vittles.

The concerted efforts of senior board members Maggie Falk, Connie Popenis and Ellen Bassett resulted in donated beverages, music and popcorn machine. Tim Tocalino's creative movie highlights added the festivities.

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Kudos for Tom

Editor:
Surrounded as we are by apathy and self-concern, a standing ovation should be given North Farmington graduate Tom Steuber.

Without condoning them, a number of the boos directed at Mr. Steuber may have been due primarily to the unexpectedness of his words on that particular occasion, rather than the words themselves.

We have residents who sincerely care about others. And the schools in the Farmington District are of comparatively high caliber. We are fortunate to have some fine teachers and an intelligent and responsible school board.

However, that is not to say that some

of our consciences are not in need of examination and our schools improvement. Unfortunately, Mr. Steuber's statement, quoted in the Farmington Observer editorial June 19, is true of many communities throughout the nation.

We desperately need to stress the importance of personal involvement and humanitarian goals above material gain and comfort. All those involved in the educational system, beginning with the parents, should assume responsibility toward this end.

If Mr. Steuber has caused a few of us to pause and re-evaluate our priorities, he has performed a great service.

CAROLL L. REINKE,
Farmington Hills

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Farmington High 'classy'

Editor:
This year during June the graduating classes of North Farmington and Harrison reacted to see who could do more damage to their respective schools and one of them even made the front page of the Farmington Observer for their feat.

But I ask what happened to the Class of 1980 from Farmington High? Well we painted our cars, had Reflections,

and we celebrated our graduation with a great deal of spirit, but we also left our school intact and gave these classes could enjoy it the way we did.

It just goes to show you that even though we didn't have the best football or basketball team or whatever, we did have the most class.

CECILIA GRAZIANO,
Farmington Hills

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Reactions were predictable. Teachers walked off the stage. People in the audience booed. Even the graduates who had been so cowed by their teachers only days before felt obliged to turn on Steuber, their elected class president. Others said he was probably right but the commencement ceremonies was the wrong time and place to take a stand.

YET THERE was never any other time, ever when a student could stand

in front of his teachers and administrators, criticize their work, suggest alternative courses of action and have no fear of retribution. Less than a week before graduation, the teachers openly lied to the seniors by intimating that graduation and the prom were cancelled. I wonder what these same teachers would have threatened Steuber with had they known in advance of the contents of his remarks.

The "weeds" (a name given to the graduating class three years ago by the teachers, comparing them to the "flowers" who had gone before) did indeed leave their mark on North Farmington. The vandals made his. The vandals got their wrists slapped and promised never, never to do it again. Steuber was booed. When the class has its 20th reunion, I'd put my money on Steuber returning as the winner. He's off to a good start.

CHARLES R. PAUL,
Farmington Hills

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Tornado alert system needed

Editor:
But all the recent bad weather, heavy rains and numerous tornado watches and warnings, I think our community needs a better warning system.

Not everyone is listening to radio or watching television when weather conditions are hazardous.

Just recently, when a tornado warning for Oakland County came into effect at 12:30 a.m., most people were sleeping for the night. My husband and I were tired, but there was severe thunderstorms forecast as late as 11:30 p.m. and the weather forecasters said to be alert for possible tornado warnings, we were reluctant to go to sleep.

As it turned out, during the Johnny Carson show, after midnight, a weather bulletin flashed on television a tornado warning for Oakland County plus other counties.

We woke our children and bedded them down in their sleeping bags in the basement as we hurriedly took the radio, flashlight and candles to wait out the all-clear.

We did lose power.

Our neighboring communities of Southfield and West Bloomfield have sirens erected in strategic places that

warn the people of the tornado warnings.

Farmington and Farmington Hills should also have these sirens.

Our very close relatives had their home completely totaled in March of 1976 tornado. Their lives were uprooted for four months with relocating until their home was rebuilt — left alone their losses.

How easily one forgets. It can happen again with Michigan's weather.

Let's spend some money to help benefit all by checking into and installing those sirens for civil defense and weather warnings.

DODIE HARRIS,
Farmington Hills

Horse enthusiast wants more coverage

Editor:
I would like to comment on the article Mr. Bob Gross wrote on Monday June 23, 1980, and appeared in your Sports column on "10-Year Old Port Wins Grand Prix."

I'm sorry to see that only such a small article was written concerning the Detroit Horse Show held at Bloomfield Open Hunt Club in Bloomfield Hills last week. It was an entire week show and such small articles appeared.

I'm sure you realize what time and training goes into the making of a Hunter/Jumper team. It takes months and months of hard training and years of giving up everything you ever want