

Performers have fun in Shakespeare show

What happens to them? There's at least one in every school. You know, the aspiring stars of stage and screen whose talent for giddy extroversion carries them to the lead in the school play and leadership in the college drama department.

Possessed of more enthusiasm than sensitive artistry, they eventually land in amateur cultural groups. And, as the cast of the Oakway Symphony

Society's recent production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" shows, there is indeed enjoyable creative life after graduation for drama majors.

It was an ambitious production. Under the auspices of the Oakway Symphony's subscription concert series, the show combined the talents of the orchestra, a girl's chorus from Southfield-Lathrup High, the dancers of the Arts Chamber Ensemble and

the actors of the Will-O-Way Repertory Theatre.

The director of Will-O-Way, Celia Merrill Turner, narrated the play. Her actors mimed the action. The dancers provided scenes of counterpoint, moving ghostlike behind a gauzy screen.

THE ORCHESTRA played Mendelssohn's music for the play behind the whole composition, with the chorus

kicking in at key dramatic moments.

Most of the participants, at least on the dramatic side, have seen their dreams of stardom changed to a fulfilling hobby. As such, performances were adequate, though far from New York's Shubert Theatre.

Shakespeare's play was originally a celebration, performed at private marriage revivals, and the spontaneous texture of such an event fits well with

the spirit and efforts of amateur cultural groups. The final effect was an entertaining multi-media carnival.

The play itself concerns the shifting allegiances of four young lovers, played out against the meddling of Oberon and Puck, the king and prince of the woodland faeries, and punctuated by the famous "play-within-a-play" sub-plot of Bottom the weaver and his fellows.

The pantomime of those actors portraying human savagery which was mostly wooden. In part this seemed to be due to a curious approach to the concept of mime, as their parts were narrated verbatim while they lip-synched on stage. Deprived of the freedom and fluidity of movement necessary for mime, they still couldn't express themselves verbally.

BOTTOM AND his fellow tradesmen came off much better. They were allowed to speak their parts, and the performances of their "play" was a highlight, capturing the antic buffoonery of Shakespeare's words. Jack Cortes as Bottom was strong but tended towards caricature while Dike Dweilley in the part of Peter Quince presented a more subtle picture.

Review

It was the graceful movement and blocking of Oberon, the fairy king, and Puck, his henchman, which cemented the action.

Dolores Bolling's Oberon, in a costume of striking savagery which was Helen King's finest in the play, literally danced her way through the part. Bonnie Turpin, playing Puck, was impish, relishing every trick she played. Together they struck a vein of pure fantasy through the balletlike interpretation of their roles.

The Oakway Symphony, under the direction of Francesco Di Blas, performed a competent rendition of Mendelssohn, despite a steadily rising temperature which caused lengthy retuning sessions between acts.

The dance scenes of the Performing Arts Ensemble fit well with the surreal set of shimmering cellophane and gauze, but were unfortunately two-dimensional due to the narrow strip of stage they had to work in.

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