

# Camelot: A Night To Remember

BY BILL MOFFETT

Since Bud Mayes established the Wilkes Community College Theater, he has directed many productions. All were well done, some were outstandingly well done. None has pleased the audience quite so much as the current production of *Camelot*. The audience cheered every scene, and at the final curtain called for more curtain calls than the cast had rehearsed.

The difficulties of mounting a production of this scale are many and large, and they are made even more and larger by a malfunction of the democratic process which dictated that the college would continue to have an inadequate auditorium. The presence of a cast and crew that large in a backstage area that tiny is awesome to contemplate, but the problem was well handled by stage manager Bill Caudill. Even more of a problem was the lack of space which necessitated the placement of the orchestra on the left aisle. The sensitivity and musical intelligence of conductor Jerry Bangle alleviated, but could not completely eliminate, a problem of balance between the orchestra and some of the solo voices.

The show was technically splendid. The keen eyes of Mayes and Bill Caudill saw Elene Stetler design a set which was tasteful and playable, Teresa Walsh design costumes which added much splash and color, and lighting by Helen Caudill which used the Theater's new equipment to create some beautiful effects, most notably at the end of Act I and in the scene with Morgan Le Fey, the spirit queen.

The orchestra was excellent. Bangle understood the placement problem. His conducting helped the singers considerably and there were some tingling moments musically.

Sandy Smalling's choreography was imaginative and vigorous, eliciting spontaneous applause on at least two occasions. Two or three of the dancers seemed a little unsure on opening night in the difficult "Lusty Month of May" number. I suspect that the run of the show will correct that.

One wishes one had space to mention everyone in the cast. All deserve it. There are, however, a few that cannot be omitted.

Eric Jennings performance as the whimsical and unpretentious King Arthur was flawless. His fine voice was the only one strong enough to sing above the orchestra without difficulty and his characterization was such that the entire show seemed to lift

when he was on stage, which was most of the time.

Judy Greene as the coquettish Guenevere was convincing and charming. She shrugged her shoulders, tossed her head, rolled her eyes and Guenevere had a personality. One is asked to believe that she could lure even the sanctimonious Lancelot away from his virtue and one believes it. Her one-on-one scenes with Arthur were the most convincing in the production. One does wish that her very pretty voice had about ten db more volume.

Lancelot, the pompous prig, was played by Don Martin. He looked the part, acted the part, and moved well. His was a most difficult role as portrayed the prototype of virtue falling to feminine charm. Martin acts better than he sings, his pleasant voice lacking in range and power.

Richard Cardwell, who played Pellinore, gave another of his solid performances. His entrance was the comic highlight of the evening and his performance never flagged. Cardwell's considerable dramatic sense grows with each performance and his keen comic sense was on display as well.

Mike Elledge played Mordred, Arthur's son by a previous liaison, and Elledge made that villainous role memorable. He was especially effective when counterpointed with the brief but fine performance of Kim Whitesides as Morgan Le Fey.

Sir Dinadan was played by Dick Sloop who always displays a remarkable range and skill as an actor. He was called upon to sing briefly by himself in Act II which was the only mar on an otherwise marvelous characterization.

Merlin the Magician was well portrayed by Ken McNeil who lived backward most effectively. Good, craftsmanlike performances were turned in by Randy Cassels as Sir Lionel and John Green as Sir Sagamore. Sir Lionel rose from the dead as Lancelot's greatest miracle, and Cassels made one believe it.

The smaller roles were all well done, some very well done. The children were all cute without being saccharine.

One last note of nitpicking. In the last few of the productions of the College Theater, some otherwise fine actors have acquired accents that sound phony and "put on" to this ear, which prefers the straight out speech of Arthur and Guenevere.

Those who see the production Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, or Saturday evening in the College Auditorium will be well entertained. This reviewer certainly was.



Michael Elledge and Terrie Callahan in "Overruled."



Charles Redmond and Karen Wheeling in "Overruled."



Bev Munchow and Helen Caudill gave outstanding performances in "Egad What a Cad."

## "Overruled" And "Egad," Student-Directed Shows

BY DIANE WAGNER

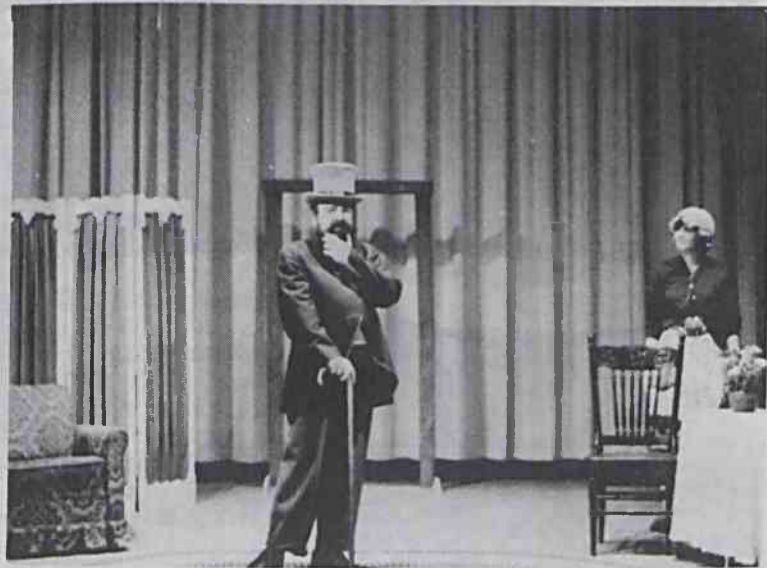
On May 14 and 15 two student-directed plays, "Overruled" and "Egad, What A Cad" played in the college theater. Both are essentially "period" pieces and thus posed some problems for the directors, Ken McNeill and Richard Cardwell. "Overruled" is drawing room comedy with some still-relevant social satire on manners and morals.

I was impressed with the stage blocking which prevented the dialogue from becoming tedious. It was an interesting play from the visual standpoint — tasteful scenery, costuming, and movement. All four of the characters, Terrie Callihan, Mike Elledge, Karen Wheeling, and Charles Redmond, are experienced performers and worked proficiently, though Elledge and Redmond at times overly exaggerated their "British" accents.

The melodrama "Egad, What A Cad" was fun for the audience who participated in booing and hissing Bertram Oleander, played by a villainous and adorable Bill Moffett; applauding the virtuous Manly Rash, portrayed nicely by Barry Canter; and sympathizing with Constant Hope, played by Tana Phillips.

Tana, for me, accomplished the very difficult task of playing the stylized techniques of melodrama without excessive exaggeration. I could actually believe she was a real heroine in a melodrama rather than an actress "playing" an ingenue.

In general, both plays were entertaining and enjoyable, and I am grateful for the variety of offerings that student-directed shows have provided this year.



Bill Moffett (alias Bertram Oleander) devises a dastardly deed in "Egad What a Cad."