

From the Stage

Sweetheart Dinner Theatre

by: Matthew Lowder

With five nights of performances and three nights of dinner, the Sweetheart Dinner Theatre could be described as nothing but a blast. For all of you that didn't have the time to attend the free Tuesday and Wednesday evening performances, "Nyah-nyah-nyah!" Three one-act comedies kept the audience (as well as the performers) jittering on the edges of their seats as punch line after punch line rolled through the Walker Center lobby in waves of laughter. From Valentines Thursday until Saturday, the comedies were preceded by an excellent prime rib buffet provided by the Culinary Department, making the \$20 tickets well worth the price.

Scrumptious salads, seasoned vegetables, groovy mashed potatoes, pork scallapini paprikash, ribs smothered in sauce, and an assortment of cream puffs and cheesecakes to choose from all combined to make this one of the most delicious meals I've ever had. I forgot the rolls, slightly brown yet still soft, warm but not too hot, smothered in sauce or dripping with butter, scraping the last remnants of mashed potatoes off your plate... Dang, I'm drooling again. Kimrey Jordan, director of the Culinary Department's involvement, obviously had an extremely talented selection of students working with him to provide us with such an astounding selection of food. Sweet southern tea and dainty cups of coffee flew around the tables. The waiting staff, supervised by Emilie Waddell, sweated in their professional haste to make sure every customer was well served. Dressed in white cooking coats and wearing poofy paper hats, the cooks resembled every person's dream of a private chef.

Although it was hard to draw attention away from your expanding waistline after pigging out on a super meal, the Theatre Department did an admirable job. As a part of their associates in fine art course, three students chose, cast, and directed their own plays. Jessica Tilley directed *The Apple Blossom Family*, a strange family gathering on New Year's Eve set in 1968 and sprinkled with amusing sexual innuendos (in my opinion). *Apres Opera* was directed by Evan Anderson and was about a reunited friendship fraught with cranky waitresses and narcoleptic boyfriends. Chad Hall, performing the part of Peter, was in many people's opinion, the funniest and most memorable actor in the event. Last, but certainly not least, with *A Beast of a Different Burden*, Shannon Reynolds made his directing debut, taking another small step on his way towards Broadway. His play, set in a New York apartment, was about a lonely vampire, a desperate woman, a friend named Dez Nutz, and a box of rats. Get the picture?

All three of the directors did an excellent job and have clearly shown their talent for theatre. According to Dave Reynolds, director of the Theatre Department, each student "...did very nice, were creative, worked hard, and had good casts."

Dave's personal thoughts on the experience were, "The weather was fabulous."

Is this an allegory for something else, or is he really talking about the clear, uninterrupted skies during the week of Valentines?

It's hard to imagine what the Dinner Theatre was like when the college first began around forty years ago. Performances took place wherever there was room, the food was cooked in homes, and it wasn't surprising if less than ten people showed up. Although the Walker Center was used once it opened in 1984, the kitchens weren't added until two years ago. Before that, the Culinary Department had to prepare all of the food in the Technical Arts Building and then wheel it into the Center. This was the same time period plagued with elevator breakdowns. Now, Mr. Jordan is making full use of the new kitchen and Dave is certainly taking advantage of the high-tech lighting system. Each of the directors are using the delightful talents of their students to an amazing extent.

Wrapping up, if you didn't get to attend the Dinner Theatre this year, keep your eyes open for next year's event. Don't just take your valentine out for a steak at Sagebrush, guys. Get her an all-star performance, a fantastic meal, and a box of cond-I mean, chocolates!

**Did you miss
The Music Man
on March 20-24th
and April 3-7th or
William of Stratford
April 10th-14th?
Well it
must suck to be you :)**