

Bruce Mann

'Balloons!' cast bursts creative play

It's lead "Balloons!" for two acts and wittily towards the end of the Durham Theatre Guild's new production of Chapel Hillian Randolph Umberger's play "Balloons!" or "The Fable of Ah!" The play—an intelligent and incredibly complex study of, among other things, the cycle of life, the conciliation of two families in Capulet-Montague tradition, "the wonders of the world," "the beginning of time and the end of time,"

Freudian phallus, hedonism, first love and the world of illusion (Amos says "we exaggerate our world")—demands a spritely, plastically lithe cast which attracts a striking and immediate identification from the audience, and this is where "Balloons!" sinks.

Blue Calhoun (Chapel Hill's Carolyn Kohli) is seventeen, a "wallflower," and just home from summer camp. Amos Revere (Arthur S. Marcus) is an aspiring

pianist of the same age—he plays "scales or Scarlatti" and he ambitiously wants "to change the world—with sounds." They fall in love on a hill in the backyard, thanks to the "designs" of Blue's capricious mother (Patty Hinson) who advises "nothing ventured, nothing gained," and in the thrill and balloonish euphoria of love and the wonders of the world, the duo storm the big city, unmarried and unprepared.

Amos, desperate for work since Blue may be pregnant, figures that "fingers like mine are a collector's item," but his auditions at bar, bordello and mortuary are unsuccessful. Blue is anxious for a proper marriage, but after checking with the doctor, discovers that she is not expecting. Swirling in Amos's employment plight, the turbulent times ensue as the two grapple with a psychological situation that is financially and mentally beyond their grasp. Finally admitting that "we weren't ready after all," the two return home to security.

Forty years later in the society of "plastic power," inhabited by black-tighted humans with pink boots and plastic capes imprinted with pink sex symbol, Amos, by now a world-famous Italianate pianist meets Blue again in the same old front yard. She is bitter; he is twice divorced. And after a purging battle between the sixty-year olds, they join together in a celestial, "Tempest"-like return to the original scene and characters of Act I, to commemorate the Fantastick, Ah-inspiring power of balloons—the thrills, their rising like sun and moon in endless cyclical repetition, the continuous recurrence of youthful spirit—everything that rising balloons can symbolize, including the characters themselves: "We are balloons, soaring up so high we forget what it is like to soar."

Randolph Umberger's play is excellent, creative, and filled with insightful lines. For example, Amos considers the night to be "as thick as octopus ink." Uncle Willie, a dear friend of Blue's mother who eventually marries her, dishes out advice worthy of the "Hee-Haw" philosopher: "Life is like a bathtub. Fill it up, but don't leave a ring for the next fellow." When Blue kisses Amos's wounded finger, she poignantly whispers that "the pain will ebb away."

With such first-rate writing it takes only an active, appropriate group of players to make the play work

successfully. Unfortunately, Director Benjamin Keaton's cast does not unanimously deliver.

Arthur S. Marcus as Amos is excellent, wide-eyed and magically motivated. Perhaps he is a hedonist, but we still love him as the never-say-die-hard who, after the New York City failure, triumphantly announces "the next time we'll be back and win the title of the world."

As Blue Calhoun, Carolyn Kohli seems miscast. She lacks the attractive, youthful, bouncy, balloonish freshness so necessary to establish the counterpoint with Amos.

Bill Shawn Smith steals the show on three separate occasions: as W.C. Fieldish Uncle Willie, as the lecherous doctor and especially as Walter, the fawning, flower-pot kicking newlywed husband who wants to buy Blue's house. He was definitely the audience favorite.

Mary Jeanne Reid Martz plays her three roles consistently. As Amos's mother, she effects the perfect tone when she tells Amos in a honey-voice that "Jesus wants you for a sunbeam." Her other roles are as the New York City

prostitute Amos encounters and as a "plastic power" mother clutching an imaginary child.

Blue's mother, the "crazy jungle woman next door," is too youthfully portrayed by Patty Hinson. She is simply not convincing as a mad widow with a furniture fetish.

Daniel L. Leonard is capable as Amos's timid father, a "marshmallow," but the material deserves a more polished performance. He is a real estate agent in the final act.

The physical "world of illusion" also depends on the Freudian sets of Benjamin Harris and Harrell Tice, the simplistic yet effective costuming of Jacqueline Gergen and the lighting and musical gurgel-and-clank effects of Benjamin Harris.

"Life at its best bobs up in the wind," as "Balloons!" should. With such a fine script, the disappointing production is, to use Amos's line, "enough to make you blue."

The play will be presented at the Allied Arts Center in Durham through Sunday, April 18, and also April 22-25.

Play tickets on sale

Ticket sales for the final production of the Carolina Playmakers current season, "Slow Dance on the Killing Ground," open on Monday, April 19 for season ticket holders and on Wednesday, April 21 for the general public. William Hanley's play will run from Tuesday, April 27 through Sunday, May 2.

A trial involves the confrontation of a triad of unusual characters in what Richard Watts of the New York Post calls "an event of forceful and steadily arresting dramatic interest."

The cast of "Slow Dance on the

Killing Ground" features William Hardy as George Rose, Elliott Moffitt as Clarence Williams, 3rd, and Lisa Galloway as Rosie. Direction is by Patricia Barnett, settings by David Nard and costumes by Mary Davis.

Tickets are available at Ledbetter-Pickard in downtown Chapel Hill and at the Playmakers Business Office in Graham Memorial Building on the UNC campus. All tickets are \$2.50. Telephone reservations may be made by calling 933-1121.

Rick Gray

Oscar show was tasteless

Surprise. The Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences has balls. George C. Scott, the man who told them to take their Oscar and stuff it, was named the best actor of 1970. And the motion picture he won it for, "Patton," swept through the two-and-one-half hour "meat parade," and picked up eight of the golden Oscars.

It was a surprising year for the Oscars: the voters actually showed they were capable of choosing the most outstanding talent, and Bob Hope got only one laugh

in his seven-minute monologue, and that was for a bad joke.

Orson Welles, Igar Bergman, and Lillian Gish got special awards, and the Beatles won a statue for the score of "Let It Be." Glenda Jackson was given the Oscar for her brilliant role in "Women in Love," and "Love Story," the movie that's taking millions away from a hopeless American public got only one award for the best original score.

But for all the Academy did right, they showed again that below the surface

still lingers the same tastelessness that has hampered the presentation in past years.

Sure, Hope was limited to only seven minutes of his mindless drivel. But Frank Sinatra, the pretty-voiced young star of the Mafia, was given the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award only a few days after he announced his "retirement."

Sure, Helen Hayes was acknowledged as the first lady of the performing arts when she was named best supporting actress, but the Academy showed again that, given a choice, they will pick a white or an Uncle Tom ahead of an outspoken racial leader—John Mills was named best supporting actor ahead of Chief Dan George, who deserved it.

Not having Bob Hope onstage for the entire two-and-one-half hours made the show a bit more bearable, but still it was two-and-one-half of boredom. The only non-boring parts were the film clips from the movies of Welles, Gish, and Bergman which preceded the presentation of their special Oscars.

Prior to the time Goldie Hawn opened the envelope containing Scott's name, Welles' filmed acceptance speech was the high point of the show. Miss Hawn read the list of nominees and asked for the envelope.

"And the winner is," she said. "... Oh my God... George C. Scott for 'Patton.'"

If that had been the end, the show would have been good, but there were the best actress and best film to be named yet. Miss Jackson won one, and "Patton" grabbed its eighth.

The bad part is that "Patton" had no real competition among the nominees, and even Scott's win was not enough to make up for the moments of tastelessness that will haunt the Academy Awards until movies gain the class of a Broadway production, as the Tonies have done.

Amateur films win

by Kathy Koch
Feature Writer

Hard work, perseverance, and creativity paid off for five UNC film-makers in Saturday's film festival at Swain Hall. The festival was sponsored by the Free Flick Committee, which awarded cash prizes to the top entries in both the 16-mm and 8-mm divisions.

H. B. Hough and Charlie Huntley won first and second place in the 16-mm competition. Hough received \$100 for his "Three Animations into Life," amusing anecdotes on human nature. Huntley received \$50 for his "Cars," a short animation with original electronic music. The winners were selected from 12 entries.

Honorable mentions went to Rick Gibbs and Charlie Huntley. Gibbs' black-and-white film "Oh Yeah" had been done for Dr. Peck's religion class.

Huntley's visual exercise "Squeeze Me" mixed painting and excerpts from commercials with music by Dr. Roger Hannay to present a comment on modern society.

Out of the 31 entries in the 8-mm

division, Jerry Gentry walked off with \$75 for his sensitive portrayal of "Claudius," a black, blind painter.

Meredith Mullins placed second for her film "It's Always Worthwhile Speaking to a Clever Man." Meredith's film was also prepared for Dr. Peck's class and is based on a theme from "Brothers Karamazov." Meredith said, "The theme was that machines are perfect; you can't conquer them. The funny thing is that while I was doing the film my machines kept breaking. I think they were trying to tell me something."

H.B. Hough won third prize, collecting \$25 for "Canvas I," an animation of people painting a canvas.

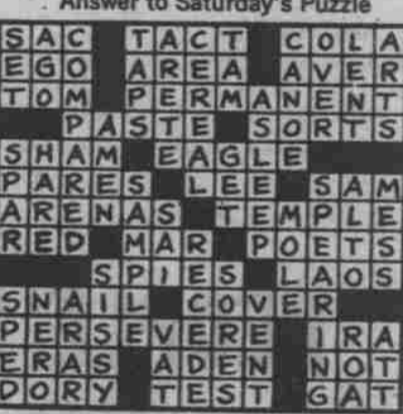
The three honorable mentions in this division went to Charlie Huntley for "Ad Lib," a colorful sight and sound trip; Jim Eldridge for his documentary on the moratorium, "Means to an End," and to Bill Hatch for his delightful rendition of "Rocky Raccoon."

This year's festival was held in hopes of initiating a yearly event. Festival coordinator Jeanne Finan said, "The response was surprising, I didn't think we'd get that many films."

Crossword Puzzle

- ACROSS
- Genus of cattle
 - Remainder
 - Uncooked
 - Saucy
 - Sicilian volcano
 - Caoutchouc
 - Sun rod
 - Still
 - Fit for plowing
 - Worthless
 - leaving
 - Three-toed sloths
 - Gist of story (colloc.)
 - Mine entrance
 - Unit of Siamese currency
 - Retain
 - Negative
 - Regret
 - Fish eggs
 - Supposing that
 - Distinguished (abbr.)
 - Flap
 - Emerged victorious
 - Skill (colloc.)
 - Break suddenly
 - Urge on
 - Baker's product
 - Quarrel
 - Vast age
 - Remuneration
 - Cake mix
 - Decay
 - Prefix: not
 - Mature
 - Satiate
 - Rabbit
 - Conjunction
 - The one here
 - Goal
- DOWN
- Whiskers
 - Conjunction
 - Pippen
 - Nerve networks
 - Latin conjunction
 - Nahoor sheep
 - Mountain lake
 - Game at bridge
 - Everyone
 - Tiny
 - Malay canoe
 - Babylonian deity
 - Diving bird
 - Metal
 - Unfamiliar
 - Measure of weight
 - Vat
 - Dawn goddess
 - Edible seed
 - Haul
 - Guido's high note
 - Possessive pronoun
 - Cooling device
 - Pedal digit
 - Be mistaken
 - Trade
 - Cover
 - Vessel
 - Pieces with horns
 - Scottish landowner
 - Old musical instrument
 - Direction
 - Negative
 - Prohibit
 - Time gone by
 - Cheer
 - Definite article
 - Note of scale
 - Indefinite article

Answer to Saturday's Puzzle



KARATE INSTRUCTION
Interested Men And Women
Are Asked To Meet Monday,
April 19, At 7:30 P.M. At The
Bounds Studio Of Dance
On Estes Dr. In The Area
Of The New Post Office.

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