

Spotlight

'Foreigner' brings excellence, humor to Lab Theatre

Eric Rosen
Theater

Something exciting is happening at UNC, and it's happening in the Lab Theatre.

With most Lab shows, one learns quickly to take the bad with the good. Not so with Larry Shue's "The Foreigner." One quickly adapts to taking the good with the excellent.

The play is a light comedy, almost absurd in its scope. To the most unlikely place—a condemned farm house in rural Georgia—come the most improbable characters: an ex-debutante who is facing reality for the first time, her dim-witted brother, a sweet but overbearing old woman who is living too much in the past, a sinister redneck, a charismatic and unscrupulous reverend, a warm and personable British officer, and Charlie, a meek and boring English businessman.

Charlie has been dragged directly from London by his long-time friend Froggy. Charlie is painfully shy and to escape having to talk to any strangers, Froggy contrives to tell the others that Charlie is a foreigner who speaks no English. Complications arise as the other characters muddle through their

own lives, using Charlie as a sounding board. Charlie begins to develop a personality, and as he helps the others become more complete, they help him become alive.

The play is, with some exception, perfectly cast. Connie Zaytoun is charming as the ex-deb, delightfully bitchy and touchingly warm. A relative newcomer to the theater, Zaytoun is at times a bit unsure of herself, but her performance takes off as she warms up to the audience. Patrick Emerson is extremely competent in the straight-laced role of Froggy. Engaging and enthusiastic, Emerson also seems to be slightly forced at first but becomes more relaxed as the scene progresses.

Wayne Covington tends to overdo his role of the redneck, creating a slightly imbalanced performance. In one crucial scene he becomes enraged and runs from the house. This comes way out of

left field—if he is trying to surprise the audience, it works. The scene, however, does not, and the result is sloppy. At other times Covington is hysterically funny, particularly in the scenes in which he torments Charlie. "I bet there's not enough left of your (dead) mother to spread on toast," he quips, and the result is quite humorous.

Allen Simpson is wonderful as the slightly retarded brother. Boyish and cute, Simpson gives an honest performance that adds a touch of stability to an unreal situation. A high point in the play is the relationship between Simpson's character and Charlie. Watch for the scenes in which he tries to teach English to Charlie. I'm still laughing.

Slightly less is given from Caroline Hall. In the part of the old woman, she is not entirely convincing. The greatest

indicator that she is elderly is her hair, which is ridiculously sprayed silver. Otherwise, she walks about stage as if she were 20 instead of 60. Her performance is uneven, at times endearing and funny and at other times unbelievable.

The least engaging actor in this production is Mark Fatzinger, who plays the hypocritical minister. His costumes don't help, as he wanders about stage in Bugle Boy khakis and oxford shirts that make him look like he belongs more at a fraternity party than at a rural logging house. But more importantly, he is not very convincing. His malevolent actions seem silly, and his calm manipulations come across as boring.

Above and beyond everyone else, the show belongs to Duncan Boothby, who plays Charlie. He is perfect in his role and is the most refreshing actor to

appear on the Lab stage in some time. His physical acting is amazing; whether dancing across the stage as an expression of joy or prancing to and fro telling a story in his "native tongue," Boothby smoothly commands the stage.

His vocalizations are equally impressive as he speaks to the others in his made-up language or in his accented English. Enormously talented, he more than compensates for the various weaknesses in the production. If not for any other reason, it is worth seeing the play to witness this performance.

Bob Wallace's direction is a bit heavy-handed, and some scenes could have worked better if he had just let them be, rather than plot every move. For example, one scene, in which two southerners scratch themselves all over as they talk over evil plans, is too obvi-

ous and unfunny. Wallace's direction works better with Boothby, but one questions who made the scenes really happen.

"The Foreigner" is the best and brightest play the Lab has presented in a while. Poignant, charming and extremely funny, the production is sure to be a success. At one point in the play, Charlie says the phrase "Blasni Blasni" (translation: "Enjoy it while you've got it" and "Ain't this nice?") This fits the production; enjoy it while you've got it, because "The Foreigner" is very nice indeed.

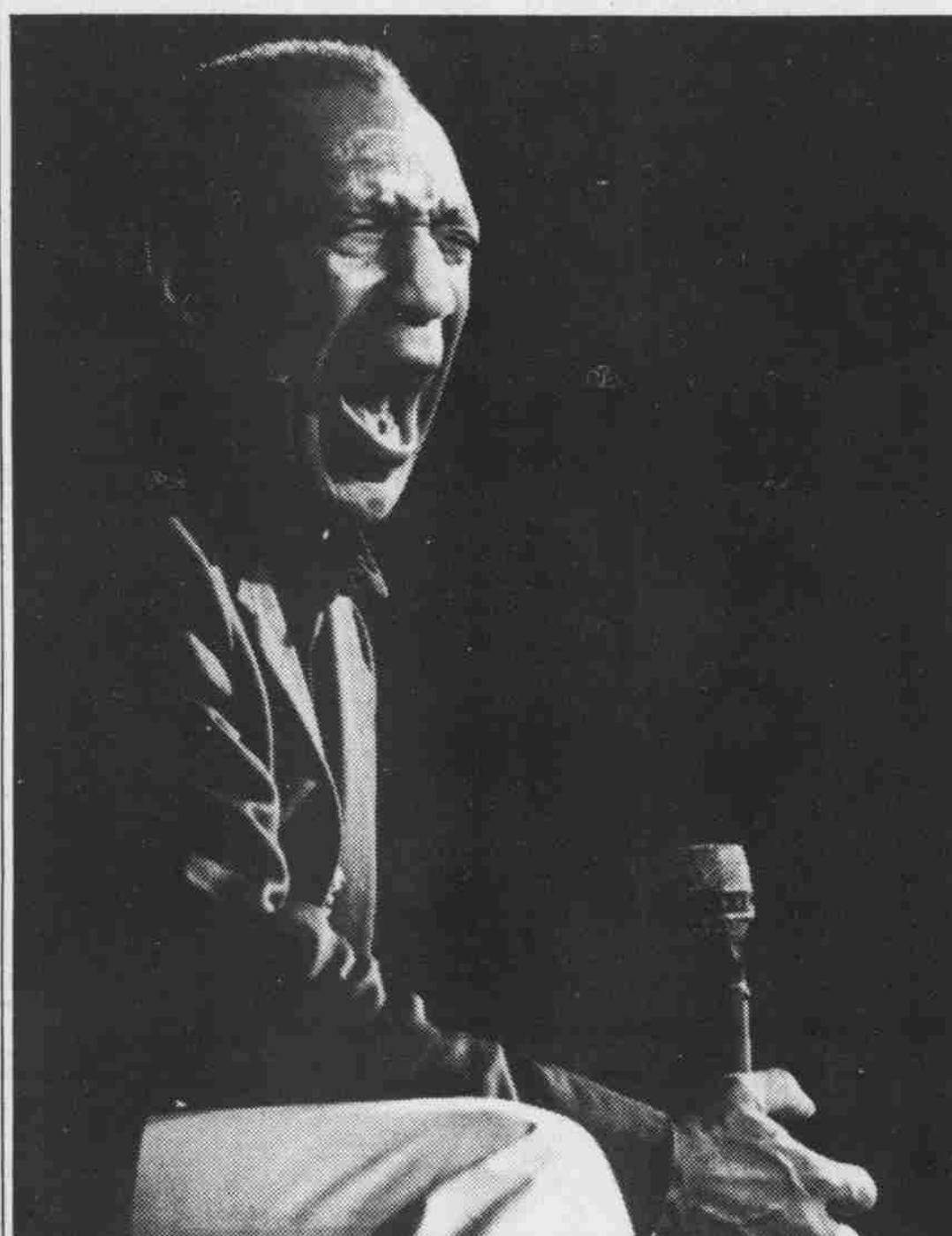
The Lab Theater will present Larry Shue's "The Foreigner" on Monday, Oct. 9, at 4 and 8 p.m. and on Tuesday, Oct. 10 at 5 p.m. in the basement of Graham Memorial. Admission is free.

Master comic delivers side-splitting act

Jessica Yates
Comedy

Thousands of people cried, slapped themselves and clutched their stomachs for almost two straight hours this weekend. And they loved every minute

of it. The cause of this laughter was none other than Bill Cosby, the classic comedian himself, who graced Chapel



Bill Cosby, himself, performed Friday at the Smith Center

Hill with his presence in the Smith Center Friday night.

He trotted up to the stage carrying a Carolina sweatshirt, something the many Duke and State fans didn't find amusing. Boos echoed through the Smith Center, but Cosby chose to ignore them, and from that point on he weaved his way into every heart, evoking howls from the light-hearted and even a few chuckles from the stoic.

Parents' Weekend served as a spool from which the first set of material spun.

They came to visit you this weekend, he said to the students. "You know why? To make sure you're still here!"

Of course, it doesn't sound that great on paper. But his inflection, the high-pitched, almost-yelling quality at the end of his punch lines, the wild, frantic gestures, the grimaces, smirks, the wide-open eyes, the bulldog wrinkles on his forehead and the laugh lines around his mouth—all of these are what make Cosby one of the best and certainly most-loved comedians of our generation.

The Smith Center accommodated the comedian by placing a large screen on each side of the stage that showed close-ups of Cosby, concentrating on his facial expressions. The only problem was that occasionally he would concentrate on addressing the video cameras instead of the audience.

Cosby spoke first to all the college students in the audience by telling them they should listen carefully because they would be able to use the lessons later in life. He continued with jokes about students' discussions with parents on money, grades and parties. One of the favorites was the college graduate who wanted to go and "find himself" instead of finding employment.

The majority of the concert, however, dealt with marriage, in particular how a marriage changes in 25 years

(the number of years Cosby has been married). For once, Cosby touched on sex, but very lightly and tastefully. The audience, the majority of which was people in their early 20s and older, appreciated the diversion from the strictly wholesome material like that in "The Cosby Show" and in older routines such as in the movie "Bill Cosby, Himself."

He also spoke of the aging process. "When you turn 40, you could drink water and it'd turn to gas!" he cried.

The routine in which he bought a pair of trifocals was by far the funniest act for the audience. Although much of the audience was younger than 40, everyone could relate. The technique of making all subject material identifiable is essential to a "family-style" show, and it's a technique Cosby has mastered.

The married couple arguing while riding in a car was another priceless routine. Cosby stated the infallible law of travelling when he said, "The biggest ego of all is the person behind the wheel of a car who is lost."

The show had only two major flaws. One disappointment was that Cosby did nothing in which he climbed into the mind of a child, something he can do extremely well. Another shortcoming was the final act, the "Visit to the Dentist" routine. Anyone who has seen "Bill Cosby, Himself" has seen it, and most will admit that it's wonderfully funny.

But when Cosby repeated the act practically verbatim, it lost a lot. It was still funny, but the connection between the Cos and the audience seemed to partially dissolve. Perhaps it was just a realization of reality, that these were routines, prepared and practiced many, many times, and that we were really just another audience.

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ment resulted from reputation catching up with reality. "We are an excellent school, but our reputation has lagged behind reality."

Among other schools in the area, Duke University was ranked fifth in the nation.

Hardin said that he had participated in the polling last year, but that U.S. News & World Report had not asked him to participate this year. The questionnaire had already picked groups of schools, Hardin said, and the university presidents had to choose the school they thought was best. If a school wasn't listed, it had no chance of being ranked.

UC-Berkeley ranked the highest of any public university at No. 13. Hardin said state schools were hindered by external controls.

"State schools have less freedom and flexibility in financial matters, but we do get appropriations from North Carolina."

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