

Spotlight

In a season of sequels, Stoppard play takes center stage

**Eric Rosen
Theater**

Broadway audiences finally have something to cheer about.

In a season that will bring New York theater-goers gems such as "Annie 2: the Sequel Based on the Comic Strip," "Fame: the Musical Based on the Television Show Based on the Movie" and "Kiss of the Spider Woman: the Musical Based on the Motion Picture," a rare treasure of originality will slip in. Tom Stoppard's newest play, "Artist Descending a Staircase," now playing at Duke's Bryan Center, is on its voyage to the Great White Way. Hallelujah!

Stoppard, known to American audiences for Tony Award winning Best Plays "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead" and "The Real Thing," has created one of the best new theatrical endeavors of the decade. His genuinely rich script is nothing short of brilliant.

Blasting away at every convention of the theater, Stoppard breaks new ground with a seemingly traditional mystery. The play opens with

Beauchamp and Martello, two aged artists who accuse each other of murdering their lifelong friend, Donner. Donner has seemingly been pushed over the railing of the staircase in their shared flat.

The only evidence in the mystery is a bit of audio recording that caught the sounds of Donner's last minutes: a snoring sound, two footsteps, the words "Ahh, there you are," a smack and the sound of Donner falling down the stairs to his demise.

Absurd? Absolutely! Stoppard is at his comedic best throughout the play, making murder a suitable game for black humor and proving that anything is fair game in his world.

The play progresses backwards through time, scene by scene in a series of memories from a summer afternoon in 1972 to a few hours earlier, to a week earlier, to 1922, to 1920 and finally to 1914, where young Beauchamp exclaims, "When I look back at my life, this is as far as I want my memory to go." The play proceeds forward after this point in a symmetrical pattern until the time arrives again at the beginning of the play.

The play focuses on the love quadrangle between the artists in their early years and a beautiful, sensitive blind woman. Sophie is their ideal: witty, charming and intelligent. But unfortunately she is dependent upon them for guidance. When they can't accommodate her, she leaves their lives. It is only later in life that they begin to realize their loss.

Stoppard's talent is not limited to the ingenious time design or the beautiful

plot. Rather, he uses these elements as devices to further his own philosophical points. Each character at some point or another takes on the voice of the author. One character will suddenly point out the elusiveness of linear time, saying "Oh, dear, I'm telling everything from back to front!"

According to Stoppard in the text, "Art consists of constant surprise. Art should never conform. Art should break its promises." This play is art by its own definition. When it feels like a bitter-sweet love drama, the play suddenly twists into a sardonic philosophic statement. When it's tired of that, it becomes a satirical whodunit or a nostalgic memory. The play has too many levels to realize in one viewing.

Direction and performances are equally wonderful. Everything about the production is whole and solid, intentional but not heavy-handed. The parallels are abundant, as scenes be-

tween the old men (played by Harold Gould, John McMartin and Paxton Whitehead) are reminiscent of scenes seen later between their young counterparts (played by Michael Cumpsty, Michael Winther and Jim Fyfe). Scenes with Sophie, played by Stephanie Roth, playing sensory games remind us painfully of the love and regret the old men feel for their memory.

The play is about culminations of life, about lost dreams and misunderstandings, about the impermanence of man and the beauty of man. But Stoppard warns against taking the play too seriously, making interjections such as, "What may seem difficult to you may be simple for the artist."

It seems almost ludicrous to praise these actors, as they are the cream of Broadway's most established actors as well as New York's fastest rising stars. Their work collectively is solid, believable and honest. British director Tom

Luscombe's work shines throughout the production. Staging, sets and lighting are equally impressive.

(An interesting note: Michael Cumpsty is a UNC graduate. He came from Britain via South Africa, received his B.A. in dramatic arts, his M.F.A., and then became a faculty member here. Seniors may remember him from their Drama 15, 16 or 35 classes.)

"As flies to ... boys are we to the gods," Stoppard surmises, bringing his play to an end. It is pure theatrical magic.

Run, don't walk, to your telephone. Call the Duke Box Office at 684-4444 for tickets to tonight's or tomorrow night's performance. After that, it's gone to New York to reach a sea of art-starved theater aficionados. Or, of course, you could wait and see it on your next trip to Manhattan, rather than seeing "Cats...Part Nine" for the fifty-second time.

Lab Theatre presents hysterical, comic view of 'Private Wars'

By JESSICA YATES

Assistant Arts and Features Editor

Death and destruction are words that come to mind when people think of war. But the Lab Theatre's newest play, "Private Wars," by James McLure, downplays the tragedy of war with the touching, humorous story of three Vietnam veterans in a hospital.

"The whole thing about the show is that it's hysterical, but the reasons behind the comedy are serious," said Chris Briggs, a junior drama/English major from Lexington, who plays the veteran Silvio. "You can see these guys have real problems."

The action is set in 1972 and focuses on characters in their mid-20s. "They could leave the hospital anytime they want," said John Bland, a senior English major from Charlotte. Bland plays Woodruff Gately, one of the veterans and a character McLure described as childlike and intellectually slow.

The other two veterans have conflicting personalities. Silvio is trying to come to grips with his family and his

occasional outbursts of violence. "(Silvio) is Italian-American, street-wise and tough, but not cruel," Briggs said.

But the third veteran, Natwick, is on the opposite side of the spectrum. A native of Long Island, Natwick, played by Ian Williams, a senior music/psychology major from Arcadia, Calif., is wealthy and very sensitive. "He's definitely a mama's boy, but he's not a total prick," Williams said. "He's got a good heart."

The production revolves around Gately, the youngest of the veterans, who is trying to fix a radio. "It's an accomplishment for him," Bland said. "Since he's been back from the war, he's failed everything."

Silvio and Natwick believe they have a duty to teach Gately about the important things in life: Silvio as an instructor in sex and Natwick as a mentor of aestheticism and morality. "They have a strange relationship," Williams said. Bland agrees. "They're very different characters," he said. "But all their

problems combined turn the show into something totally hysterical." The actors concurred that the bar scene, in which Silvio tries to teach Gately how to pick up Catholic girls by pretending to be a priest, is probably the funniest scene in the play.

Aside from the humor, the play addresses the notion that "there are private wars in all of us," Bland said. Silvio, for example, "has a bizarre

tendency toward violence that he had perfected in the war, but now he is in the real world, and his skills don't apply," Briggs said. "He's very obsessed with sex. Sex is violent to him, and I guess a lot of people see it that way."

The common thread of the character's involvement in the Vietnam War simply serves as a backdrop for the play, rather than a focus. "I believe (McLure) is a Vietnam veteran," said director

Paul Goodson, a senior business administration/theater major from Charlotte. "His plays often center around people who have somehow been touched by the Vietnam War. In this play, the war is a vehicle to show three human beings needing each other."

But Bland is quick to explain that the play is not about the United States' involvement in Vietnam. "It's not a war-protest play at all," he said.

Williams agreed. "He talks more about men's underwear than the war."

"Private Wars" will be performed in the Lab Theatre at Graham Memorial as a public preview on Saturday at 8 p.m. It also will be presented Sunday and Monday at 4 p.m. and 8 p.m., and Tuesday at 5 p.m. All shows are free of charge. Ticket distribution begins 45 minutes before the show.

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By DOUG HOOGERVORST

Staff Writer

The only problem with being number one is that there is no place to go but down. The North Carolina volleyball team faces this dilemma going into this weekend's Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament being held in Hilton Head, S.C.

The Tar Heels are the ACC's defending champions and will enter the tournament as the top seed. UNC went 6-0 in conference play during the regular season, and after a first-round bye North Carolina will face the winner of the Clemson-Maryland game Sunday at 5 p.m. For the year, UNC's record stands at 19-8.

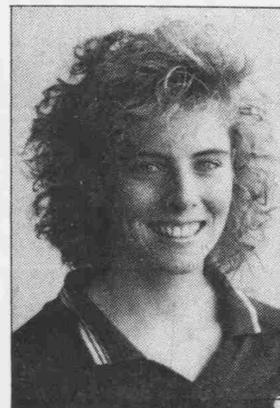
Though the team went through the regular season undefeated in the ACC, North Carolina assistant coach Eddie Matthews said that no one in the conference can be overlooked.

"We definitely are not looking past anybody," Matthews said. "Right now, we're preparing for Clemson or Maryland."

North Carolina beat Maryland in College Park in three games but needed all five games to beat Clemson in Carmichael Auditorium on Nov. 3.

"When we played Clemson here, we went five games with them," Matthews said. "We came on at the end, playing better to win, and I know our girls remember that. I'm sure Clemson's girls remember that, too."

Clemson, the league's toughest serving team, is led by hitters Tisha Green and Wendy Anderson. Green, a junior college transfer, has given the Tigers a big boost on offense, and setter Jenny Yurkanin has been a calming force on



Amy Peistrup

the floor, averaging over nine assists a game.

Playing the fourth-seeded Tigers is not a given, though. Maryland, the fifth seed, lost to Clemson in a five game barn-burner just a week ago and is a well-balanced team (third in the ACC in hitting percentage at .266 and in digs per game at 17.12). Matthews called Maryland an up-and-coming team.

"They're going to be a team to reckon with in the future," Matthews said.

The Tar Heels' story is the same as it's been all season. UNC is led by the ACC's all-time kill leader, Sharon German (1,841 career kills), and junior Liz Berg. The German-Berg punch is the ACC's most lethal pair, first and second in the conference in kills per

game. German averages 5.22 kills per game, fifth in the country, and hits at a .378 clip, good for tenth in the nation and tops in the ACC. Berg pounds out 4.46 kills per game, is second in the ACC with 0.66 aces per game and leads UNC in digs.

"It's going to be a team effort (for us to win)," Matthews said. "There can be no one individual carrying us even though Sharon and Liz are playing well for us on the outside. It's going to be everyone on the floor and everyone on the bench."

Behind the Dynamic Duo are setter Amy Peistrup, hitters Paula Martin, Mel Mroczek and Seresaa Setzer, blockers Chris White, Lisa Joffs and Carolyn

Flanders and defensive players Miriam Fulford, Patti Hopkins and Summer Sieg.

Each has stood out for a period of time, but it has been the emergence of the freshman Peistrup as a consistent setter (third in the ACC with 9.57 assists per game) that has helped propel the Tar Heels this season. North Carolina will need a big weekend from the freshman, who seems to thrive under pressure.

"Amy's been playing better as the season's gone on," Matthews said. "She's been practicing very intensely, and we're expecting that this weekend should be a good weekend for her. She seems to respond well under pressure and in big matches."

Tickets

from page 1

a substantial push in the economy of the area. It would seem a little strange to make them pay more for stimulating the area."

Giduz said the University should see the tax as an opportunity "for stewardship as a good corporate citizen of this country."

Smith Center Director Jeff Elliott said the tax would mean less money per ticket for artists and promoters, and consequently fewer entertainers at the center. "It puts us at a disadvantage at enticing concerts to come here."

"For example, if we have to keep the ticket price at \$20 and have to take a dollar out, that would be less for the artist and the promoter."

"The place where they can make the most money — and it's strictly a business decision — is the place where they're going to go."

Ticket prices for entertainment are set by artists and promoters, not building owners, Elliott said. "It's not that easy to tack on \$1."

And by making the center less attractive to entertainers, the tax would hurt the center in an increasingly competitive performance-site market, Elliott said. "I would be more favorable to this if it were statewide. It would be unfair to single us out."

The Smith Center is contending with sites in Charlotte, Greensboro and Winston-Salem to attract performers,

he said.

Giduz said the tax would be good on a statewide basis. The N.C. House of Representatives two years ago passed a \$1 tax on Greensboro Coliseum tickets, and Charlotte has been interested in an entertainment tax for the Charlotte Coliseum, he said.

Elliott said any Smith Center profit was evenly divided between athletic scholarships and a reserve fund for equipment maintenance.

Profits in the concert business are not always guaranteed, Elliott said. "We have to rely on promoters to bring events here. Some years you can generate a tremendous amount of revenue, and other years you can't."

The center sells between 150,000 and 225,000 tickets a year, not including basketball tickets, Elliott said. Revenue from ticket sales, which is essentially rental fee charged to entertainers, is between \$500,000 and \$600,000 a year, he said.

The center made a profit two years ago, but only broke even last year, Elliott said.

Martina Ballen, the athletic department's business and finance director, said a tax would also affect athletic ticket sales, regardless of whether ticket prices were actually raised.

Racism from page 1

her retrospective view with an account of a graduate from the 1970s, who said she had benefited from the visions of her predecessors.

Suggestions of going to the sources — department chairmen, University administration, and community and state legislators — all focused on the need for persistent confrontation.

"The first step in coping is to realize we're in a war," Stone said. "We must address short-term problems, and at the same time make long-range proposals."

Stone said four aspects were crucial to the success of the anti-racism crusade: the need for students in the same major area of study to organize; the need for an office of minority concerns; the construction of a new Black Cultural Center; and the need for a department of African-American Studies.

"You actively and formally let people know your dissatisfaction. You go everywhere black people are gathered and recruit as you go along."

"We need to go to a new level in our struggle against racism."

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