

Features

“The Fantasticks” a humorous break

By Kay Alton
Staff Writer

Well, glory hallelujah, and bringing on the band. The current UNCA drama department's production of "The Fantasticks" presents real entertainment for the sheer pleasure of the audience.

What a relief it was to be treated to singing, dancing and a plot without a dutiful response of condemnation over anyone's solvable social issue.

Students have the opportunity from Feb. 23-27 to enjoy one of the performances at the Carol Belk Theatre on campus. The story of two lovers who become victims of their parents' cockeyed attempts at reverse psychology has been the longest running musical in the world.

Since an off-Broadway opening night in 1960, "The Fantasticks" cast has included stars like Anna Maria Albergotti, Richard Chamberlain, Bert Lahr, Liza Minnelli, and Glenn Close.

UNCA's chairman of the drama department, Scott Walters, is the director for the play that was written by Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt.

This production demonstrates several innovative and creative enhancements unique to the UNCA production. Some of the traditional roles are altered with good results. Also, the dark and lackluster sets some productions use for "The Fantasticks" have been brightened and improved.

The first observation of the wall around which much of the singing and conversation occurs, is actually a stick held very steadily by the mute, Jenny Frather, whose makeup cleverly resembled that of the famous mime Marcel Marceau.

Two of the roles often cast using men were filled by women.

The character of Matt's mother, hilariously portrayed by Lauren Hobbs, and Luisa's father, excellently portrayed by Zach Walker, present another clever deviation from the original script.

The mother's character, Hucklebee, originally called for Matt's father in the role.

Walters' adaptation of the script fit a female character. It worked very well, and Hobbs' strong voice and comedic style improved on the original.

For those who may not be familiar with the play, Matt, played by Matthew Rossi, and Luisa, played by Terry Summers, are teenage sweethearts separated by a wall between their backyard gardens. The same wall is really a ploy to ensure that they discover each other as future husband and wife.

The ongoing matchmaking attempts of Luisa's father and Matt's mother provide funny lines, great songs, spiffy dance steps and maybe a moral lesson or two craftily concealed as entertainment.

The set was designed using a cityscape on the raised backdrop that supported the musicians. Autumn colors of gold and hues of red and blue set the season for Matt and Luisa's love adventure.

El Gallo, portrayed by Tracy Hackney, made a convincing and swashbuckling narrator of the story as well as a believable seductive intruder into Luisa and Matt's romantic duo. Hackney performed his spoken lines boldly and with gusto when arranging for the farcical alteration set up by the parents to ensure that Matt becomes Luisa's hero.

The costumes and props, including the sun and moon, hidden in a giant trunk gave a convincing setting of a more simple time. It was refreshing

to be involved in a duel with wooden swords and slapstick boxing bouts between Henry and Mortimer, played by Jason Allen and Liam Bryan, while trying to capture Matt. Who would not be impressed with Henry's bumbling Shakespearean misquotes and his faithful sidekick of 40 years, Mortimer? At one point, Bryan crouched in that excruciatingly difficult Russian dancing position and successfully threw his legs out in perfect time without falling on his derriere.

The musical production had some very strong voices, in particular, Summers, Hobbs and Walker. Training for dance and voice are evident in the performance. Summers' very clear voice carries both in the songs and in her dialogue. She remained poised and articulate throughout the different ups and downs over the garden wall, as well as the ins and outs of the dance steps.

Mother Hucklebee had the gestures down pat and her musical voice was strong and clear as well. She has the comedic timing necessary to keep the audience involved in a humorous interaction.

The stronger voice among the male performers was definitely Allen. Dressed in a bowler derby and obnoxious plaid sport coat peculiar to the era, he belted out a rendition of "Never Say No" and a couple of duos with Hobbs. They fought and Fraternized through several intricate song and dance numbers.

While El Gallo opened the performance very nicely by singing the traditional hit number "Try To Remember," his voice was not quite strong enough to overcome the domination of the pianist and keyboard artist. The music was often too loud for the solo performances of Matt and the narrator.

For those of us who have been heavily burdened with must-do academic projects before spring break, treat yourself to a real belly laugh by attending a fun performance of "The Fantasticks." The performance was a treat I deserved, and you do too.

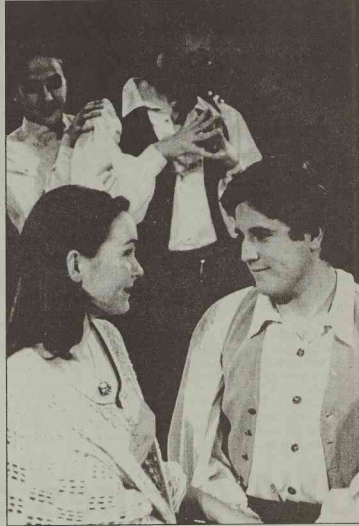


PHOTO COURTESY OF CAROL BELK THEATRE

"The Fantasticks," an off-broadway musical, will be at the Carol Belk Theatre Feb. 23-27. Terry Summers (front left) and Matthew Rossi (front right) play teenage sweethearts.

Review

academic notices

- Study Abroad application deadlines: Angers, France • 3/1; HC 30 for more information
- LSAT Prep Program, cost \$300 (includes study materials), register by 3/3 (x6558); meets every Wed. for 8 weeks, 6-9 pm, UNCA Campus • 3/15-5/3
- GRE Prep Program, cost \$300 (includes study materials), register by 3/3 (x6558); meets every Tues. for 8 weeks, 6-9 pm, UNCA Campus • 3/14-5/2
- Term I classes end • 3/3

athletics

- Women's & Men's Basketball: Big South Conference tournament, game times TBA, Asheville Civic Center • 3/1-4
- Women's & Men's Tennis vs High Point, 2 pm • 2/25

black history month

- Poet & Essayist Nikki Giovanni, Lipsinsky, 7 pm • 2/24
- Lectures: "The Political Philosophy of Nelson Mandela," by Dr. Kibujjo M. Kalumba, HLH, 3:15-4:30 pm • 2/24

career opportunities/jobs

- Summer Employment Fair 2000-30 organizations; 1-3 pm, HC Lounge • 2/29
- Career Center Webpage - www.unca.edu/career; job listings available or visit WHC; job openings, in Career Resources Library
- To be notified of part-time job openings via e-mail, e-mail dkeller@unca.edu
- Summer Employment Fair: Camps & other organizations, HC, 1-4 pm • 2/29
- WNC Consortium Job Fair: Graduating seniors & alumni are invited to meet & interview with employers, Renaissance Hotel • 3/28
- R.A. applications available, Housing Office, questions? call Melanie x6700 • due 3/14
- College Television Network • \$250 a semester • call Becky 1-800-586-4636

concerts/live entertainment

- Poet & Essayist Nikki Giovanni, Lipsinsky, 7 pm • 2/24
- "The Fantasticks," musical, CBT • 2/23-27
- "Blues in the Night," Musical, 8 pm, LH Aud. • 2/28
- Lillian Pearson, Pianist, HLH, 7:30 pm • 3/1
- "The Slow Way Back," a reading by Judy Goldman, LF, 7 pm • 3/2

etc.

- Writers at Home: Readings by A. Van Jordan & Dale Neal, 3:30 pm, LF • 2/27
- America Reads - Read Across America Day - Volunteer to visit one of the schools, call x6536 • 3/2
- Blood drive, 10 am-3:30 pm, HC Lounge (sign up in DH 2/21-2/25) • 3/1

exhibits

- Seth Goodman Exhibition, University Gallery, OH, opening 6:30 pm • 2/25-3/14
- Dorothy Hartscock Exhibition, 2nd Floor Gallery, OH • 2/25-3/7
- "They Call 'em the Blues: A Collection of Images Celebrating the Blues," Randy Marrs Exhibition, Blowers Gallery • thru 2/28
- Asheville YWCA photos, newspaper clippings, documents from 1907 to present, RL • thru 3/21

health & fitness center

- Softball, Soccer & Innetube Water Polo Info meeting, HFC 203, 6 pm • 2/28
- Soccer & Softball Officials Clinics, HFC 205, 8 pm • 3/14

leadership opportunities

- R.A. applications available, Housing Office, questions? call Melanie x6700 • due 3/14

lectures

- "The Military: What Role in U.S. Foreign Policy?" by Lt. Col. Steve Horn, 7:30 pm, OCC • 2/28

outdoor programs - HC (x6001)

- Summer Employment Fair 2000 - camps, parks, etc., 1-3 pm, HC Lounge • 2/29
- Equipment Rental - backpacks, sleeping bags, tents, mountain bikes, HC
- Ski Wolf Laurel-College Nights - Tuesdays and Thursdays - \$17 (lift/rental)

tickets - discounts - hc 27 - 10 am to 4 pm

- Asheville Art Museum, \$3
- Blues in the Night - students \$5 • 2/28
- Biltmore House, \$22
- Chimney Rock, \$6
- Ski Wolf Laurel - Lift ticket Vouchers, \$12
- Smoke Hockey tickets, \$4 • 2/24, 2/26, 2/27
- United Artists Theatres Movie tickets, \$4
- Student Rush \$5 Ticket - to Diana Worthing Theatre Mainstage events, call 257-4530 for availability

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