

CAMPUS LIFE

'Chestnut Brass' shines in Dunn Center

By MITAN

If you missed the performance of the Chestnut Brass Company on Sept. 14 at the Dunn Center for the Performing Arts, you missed the best thing that's come to Rocky Mount in a long time.

The evening started with the performance of a lively arrangement of the Cole Porter tune *Night and Day* and got better as the night progressed. The Chestnut Brass Company is, as the name implies, a brass quintet featuring two trumpets, a French horn, a trombone, and a tuba as the primary instruments.

Bruce Barrie is the lead trumpet player with Jay Lichtman as the competent second chair. Marian Hesse on the horn gave a

splendid performance. Larry Zimmerman on the trombone performed a number of outstanding solos. Finally, Jay Krusch on the tuba was the most enthusiastic of the musicians, really rocking to the music as it was performed.

In the first half of the program, the group played a number of classical pieces. The most notable of these was a Bach suite which demonstrated the quintet's virtuosity. The performance of this arrangement, especially the *Badinerie*, made the piece seem as though it were written for brass rather than for flute and strings.

During the first half of the program the group also started to introduce various period instruments. Marian Hesse also demonstrated her expertise on the

Review

natural horn. This instrument is similar in appearance to the French horn but has no keys. Instead, the musician must alter the pitch of the music by skillful placement of the hand in the bell of the horn. The *Overture to the Barber of Seville* ended the first half of the outstanding concert.

The second half began with a transcription of the Grainger Suite. More antique instruments were introduced, including the B flat cornopean, played by Jay Lichtman, and various sizes of over-the-shoulder-saxhorns played by the remainder of the

group. These instruments are similar in appearance to the upright tuba but are designed to allow more comfortable playing while marching by having the instrument held horizontally with bell pointing to the rear.

The company displayed their mastery of the instruments, playing a medley of tunes from the Civil War era. They play music written for them by a number of modern composers, most notably Peter Schickele aka P.D.Q. Bach. One of the numbers was Brass Calendar by Schickele. This lively and humorous work lets you experience the months of the year, especially the chaos and final relief of tax time.

The second half of the performance ended with the 1932 Duke Ellington tune, *It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)*, and an invitation to come up on stage after the performance to the antique instruments firsthand and talk to the musicians. The encore was another Cole Porter piece, *Creole Love Song*.

The Dunn Center's 1,200-seat Minges Auditorium is spacious, well-lighted, and has excellent acoustics for concerts such as this

as well as for plays and other performances planned for the season. If you've never seen a play, this is definitely the place to go, but leave the kids at home. The only detriment to the evening was the large number of "not ready for culture" children of what appeared to be primarily school staff members. While this did not cause too much of a problem, unless you were unfortunate enough to be seated in the next row, it was distracting at times.

Be sure to see some of the coming attractions including: The North Carolina Dance Theatre of Oct. 4 featuring dance pieces by Salvator Aiello: The "1940s Radio Hour" Oct. 24-26, and Oct. 31-Nov. 2 a Wesleyan Theatre production; and "Always Patsy Cline" a musical production of the Arkansas Repertory Theatre on Nov. 19.

Tickets for these and numerous other productions can be purchased at the Dunn Center box office from 12 to 5 p.m., Tuesday through Friday.

Don't miss another opportunity to experience live, quality productions at reasonable prices and close to home.

'I Hate Hamlet' successful as Playhouse season opener

By KEN RIPLEY

Paul Rudnick's "I Hate Hamlet" was an especially spirited opening to this season's productions of the Playhouse Community Theatre in Rocky Mount.

Delayed a week by Tar River flooding, the two weekends of performances were a hilarious look at how the ghost of John Barrymore helps a reluctant television star discover a true love of Shakespeare and the theater.

Wesleyan student and Playhouse veteran Kevin Corbett played Andrew Rally, a somewhat cynical star of TV "young doctor shows" and snack commercials who is given the chance to play Hamlet in Central Park. Andrew, not particularly interested in acting and who hates "Hamlet," is reluctant to accept but is pressured into taking the role by his elderly agent, Lillian, and his "hopelessly romantic" actress girlfriend, Dierdre, played by Wesleyan's Melinda Harden, also a Playhouse regular.

Lillian, played by veteran Susan Reese, in her youth enjoyed an affair with Barrymore, and Dierdre is in awe of "the great plays — Ibsen, Camille, nothing under four hours."

Upon moving to New York, Andrew is set up by a psychic

Review

real estate agent, Felicia, in an apartment once owned by famous Shakespearean actor John Barrymore. Andrew's life is then turned upside down when the bawdy ghost of Barrymore — played by popular Playhouse veteran Duncan Baker — shows up to tutor Andrew in the role.

Not everyone is thrilled with Andrew's decision to tackle the role. His cynical and Hollywood-awed producer, Gary, begs Andrew to accept a million-dollar television deal instead rather than bury his talents in Central Park.

"It's Shakespeare," he complains. "It's like algebra on stage."

But Barrymore pricks Andrew's pride — "What are you to be, an actor or a lunchbox?" he asks — and he insists that playing Hamlet is within Andrew's reach.

"We must never confuse truth with asthma," Barrymore exclaims with his customary theatrics. The secret of Hamlet?

"Tights," he proclaims. Andrew accepts Barrymore's challenge and six weeks later performs the role. In the process, both ghost and actor discover truths

about themselves and their profession.

"I Hate Hamlet" was thin drama, but it laid on both physical and verbal comedy thickly. Corbett and Baker shined in their roles, moving easily and believably on stage. Mentor ghost and apprentice Hamlet played off each other as one-liners — and laughs — fly back and forth.

Harden and Reese handled their brief supporting moments in the spotlight with customary skill, and Playhouse newcomer Niki Rowe held her own as Felicia. The real standout among the supporting cast, however, was Playhouse newcomer Drew Davis, whose producer almost stole scenes with his considerable energy, sharp timing, and ease on stage. He's a comedy find for the future.

Director Jerry Sipps kept the action moving briskly, and David Blakely's sets and special effects fitted nicely into a total package.

Upcoming Playhouse productions are ambitious and exciting, including "The Diary of Anne Frank," "Guys and Dolls," the Christmas Chorus, and "Driving Miss Daisy." Season tickets are still available and a great bargain.

And while "I Hate Hamlet" is not as well known, it was a great start to a great season ahead.

Discount seats available

From time to time (not guaranteed for every event), there may be a limited number of tickets for events at the Dunn Center that will be available to students at a discounted price.

The center has a limited number of Student discounted tickets for the North Carolina Dance

Theatre's Friday night performance at 8 p.m. for \$4 each. Students were able to purchase tickets at the Dunn Center Box Office, and in front of Doc's between 12:30 and 2:30 p.m. Thursday. (These discounted tickets are normally priced at \$10, student rate.)

Reporters wanted!

Anyone interested in writing for *The Decree*, please contact Editor Jessica Brown at 5328.

No experience necessary.