

Theater of the Deaf makes noise with 'Figaro'

Laura Somerville
Reporter

As the main stage lights brighten, Viva, a man dressed in a tailored black suit, steps out from behind the curtain into the presence of his fellow cast members. Entering into conversation he articulates his views with vivid gestures and expression; however, he does not speak.

Viva, along with the cast members of "Oh, Figaro!" or "The Adventures of Viva and Figaro" are unique because they combine the talents of deaf and hearing actors into one vibrant production.

Viva, one of the main characters in "Oh, Figaro!" becomes involved in the romantic farce which twists and turns in the journey towards true love. In Act I, the production involves a rich toy maker who wants to marry a young immigrant.

Unfortunately there is another who competes for the fair maid's love, her immigration sponsor. In an effort to win her affections, both men employ the help of outside counselors to gain her atten-

tion.

One man chooses an incompetent individual, while the other confides in a trusted old acquaintance. The development of the central plot leads those involved to question loyalty, true love and friendship.

The play, produced by the National Theatre of the Deaf and directed by Sheryl Kaller, is an adaptation from "The Barber of Seville" and "The Marriage of Figaro" by Pierre de Beaumarchais, written by John Augustine and Willy Conley.

The National Theater of the Deaf utilizes a company of deaf and hearing actors and actresses in order to allow the audience to hear and see every written word. The production will be performed at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 10, in McCrary Theatre.

During rehearsal, a few of the cast members were available for questions. Shanny Mow, a deaf gentleman who plays the character Basil, pointed out that, "What makes us a bit different from non-deaf actors is that we rely more on our bodies for communication, while those hearing rely on their

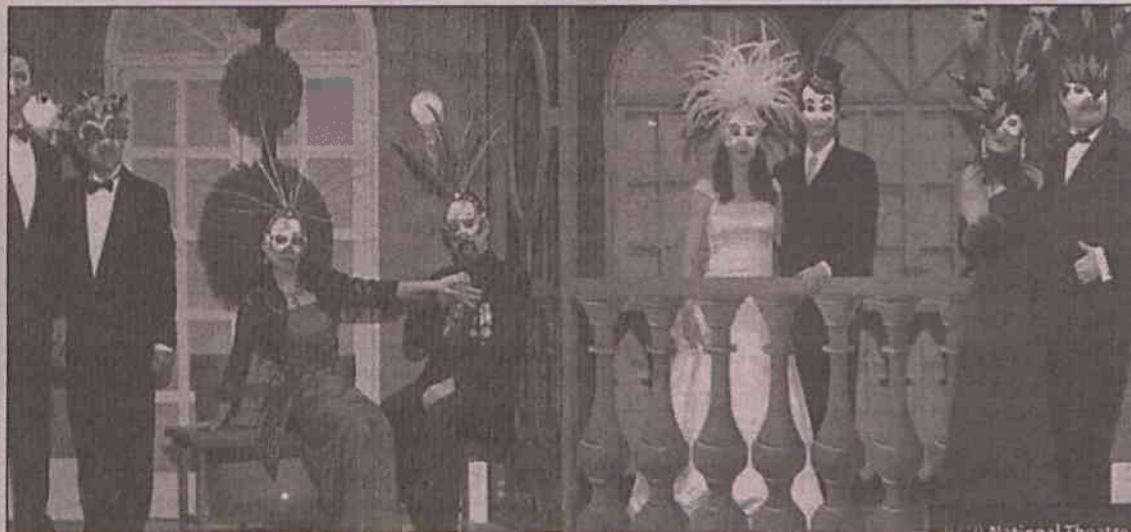


Photo courtesy of the Office of Cultural Programs

The National Theater of the Deaf perform "Oh, Figaro!" in McCrary Theater Wednesday night.

voices."

In productions that combine the hearing and deaf, Mow said "most of the time hearing actors do voices for actors while we sign our lines. They work with us to try to synchronize the words of American Sign Language and English."

Although to most the differences in communication may seem to be an overwhelming challenge, Mow and fellow cast members embrace the task.

Like any other actor, Mow said, "Every performance you are offered the challenge of how to deal with different theaters and different audiences. You try to get the best out of each other as actors for each performance. Each night we try to capture the best performance we can."

The National Theater of the Deaf was established 36 years ago and is nationally recognized for its talented company of actors.

Having performed more than

7,000 productions in 30 countries and in all 50 states, the National Theater of the Deaf has received recognition from the Tony Awards and the Grammy Awards, and has been chosen from highly competitive groups to travel and perform internationally.

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John Mayer's 'Heavier Things' shows maturity, jazz influences

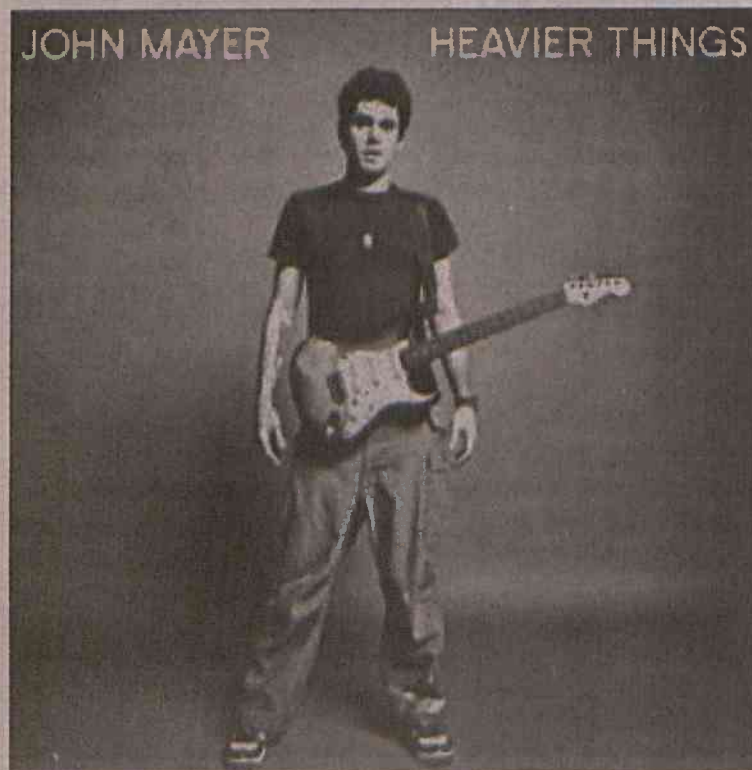


Photo courtesy of johnmayer.com

"Heavier Things" was released Tuesday to critical acclaim.

Brittany Yelverton
Reporter

John Mayer's highly anticipated album, "Heavier Things," is a blend of soulful ballads and guitar-driven melodies that reflect Mayer's evolution and maturity as a musician.

"Room for Squares," John Mayer's first major record, was released in 2001. His introspective lyrics and remarkable song writing attracted fans of pop, blues and jazz music and earned him a nomination for the Grammy Award's Best New Artist. Mayer's new release is sure to generate as much buzz as "Room for Squares."

The expressive lyrics on Mayer's newest album are what set it apart from his previous recordings. Though "Room for Squares" was an excellent record,

"Heavier Things" is a more emotive look at what drives the human spirit. Songs included on the album comment on issues dealing with love, self discovery and the meaning of life.

Mayer's recent single gracing the radio airwaves, "Bigger Than My Body," describes how people are restricted not only by their bodies, but by the world. The major appeal of "Heavier Things" is the fact that the songs are defined by emotions that everyone can relate to.

In "New Deep" Mayer sings about the boundless search for defining life. "Cause ever since I've tried/ Trying not to find/ Every little meaning in my life/ It's been fine, I've been cool/ With my new golden rule."

Mayer's new album also differs from his past recordings because it draws on various musi-

cal influences.

The use of acoustic and electric guitar are signature elements in all of his music, but "Heavier Things" also incorporates horn sections into several of the songs, bringing a fresh, jazzier sound to John Mayer's music. The first track, titled "Clarity," uses trumpets and cornets to produce an upbeat, contemporary feel for the song, while "Come Back to Bed" utilizes the horn line to create a romantic aura.

Mayer's "Heavier Things," is an amazing album from a skilled musician. This new album will delight longtime fans, but no matter what your musical preference, this record will entertain as well as inspire you.

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