

# Who knew Dots could be so entertaining?

BETH HALL  
News Editor

Holly Hendricks certainly earned her Meredith Performs Outstanding Performance Award that she received Monday morning.

The *Sunday in the Park with George* audience certainly knows why. Hendricks, who was brilliant as leading lady Dot, however, was not a lone talent.

All of the actors, particularly Peter Vitale as George, as well as director Cathy Rodgers, scenic designer Bill Rodgers, costume designer Suzette Pare and musical director Nancy Whelan Rice should be commended for an outstanding production of Steven Sondheim's musical.

James Lapine's book, on which the play is based, was inspired by father of post-impressionism Georges Seurat and his pointillism masterpiece "La Grande Jatte." The pointillism movement Seurat pioneered is similar to impressionism. In the same way a television puts together many, many dots to make a picture, so the artists puts together many points of color to create figures. Through the play, we meet Seurat and watch how

he interacts with the famous figures in his piece and how he wrestles with his art.

"La Grande Jatte" was first ridiculed because it seemed such a bastardization of the impressionist movement that was so popular at the time. Soon though, the enigmatic figures relaxing on a Sunday afternoon on the island of Grande Jatte were immortalized in the art culture.

The musical is as captivating and thought-provoking as the painting. The scenery displays what Seurat sees—the water, the trees, the sailboats. The scenery, which gives the audience an accurate idea the backdrop of "La Grande Jatte," is actually magical in parts. At the end of act one, when figures take their places on the stage, the audience "sees" the original canvas.

The characters were memorable and endearing. Dot (she's a pointillistic figure, get it?) is George's model and sometimes lover. She is his opposite: visceral, practical, uneducated and in love with George. He is cool, intellectual and consumed by his art.

They are crossed by their own stars and destined not to be

together. Hendricks and Vitale help us feel for their characters. After their duet "We Do Not Belong Together," there was a tangible heaviness in the air.

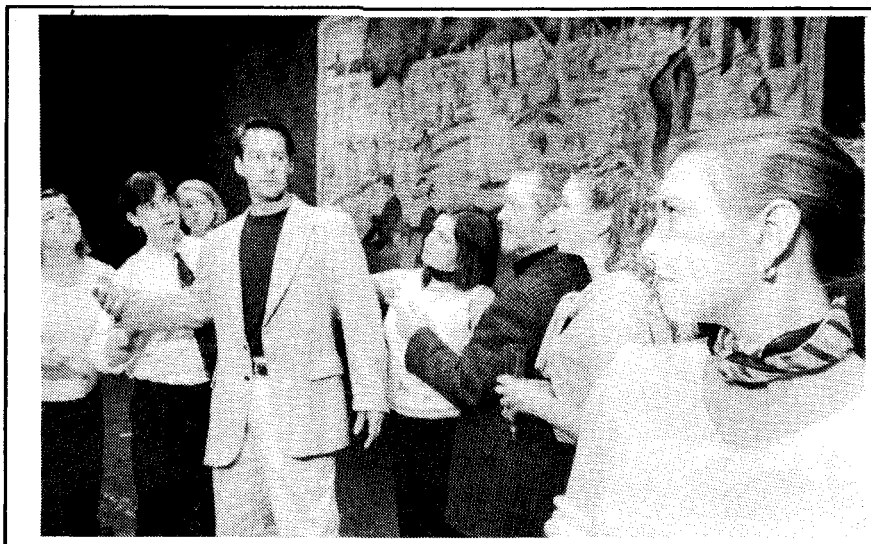
The themes of transience and our human desire to order the unorderly were poignant and well presented. The first half of the play is set in 1884 when Seurat created the painting.

The second half is set in 1984 at the premiere of Seurat's grandson's artistic revisioning of the original complete with strobe

light and metal. The audience watches how time changes things including the island.

In 1984, cars take the place of trees. We also see the aging and rebirth of the characters. We sympathize with the aging mother of George in the first act and the aging and death of George's grandson's grandmother (George's daughter) in the second act. But there is also rebirth. George fathers Dot's child in the first act, and "La Grande Jatte" itself is reborn in the second act.

What is most moving though, is George's desire to control and have a perfect life. This is an impossible task. His imagination is his escape and his tool. He is able to transform the life in front of him. Two back-biting shop-girls become lovely soft figures standing near the water. An embittered bum relaxes with his dog on the shore. Squabbling couples become a picture of contentment. This is George's power, and he cannot give this up, not even for Dot.



Peter Vitale as George and Holly Hendricks as Dot, far right, perform in Meredith's production of *Sunday in the Park with George*.

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STEVE WILSON

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