

Lab! to Take Stage With Musical Make-Believe

By Ferris Morrison
Staff Writer

When the reality of college life becomes too much to handle, it helps to escape the hustle and bustle by delving into a land of make-believe, where fairy tales swirl together in a story of ever after.

"Into the Woods," the first musical produced by Lab! Theatre since 1997, unfolds when Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, Rapunzel and Jack and the Beanstalk are thrown together in the woods.

Lab!'s production of "Company" in 1997 was the last time the group had a chance to display its musical talents.

Director Beau Tidwell said the play presents the original stories we remember from our youth and then contorts those stories to show the dark side of the fantasy.

"As much positive potential as (fairy tales) have, there is also a very dark element to it," Tidwell said. "The fantasy world is where there are no rules, so it works both ways, and you have to be careful of it."

The characters' lives become intertwined like people in a soap opera. The characters meet a witch in the forest and a baker and his wife on a quest to have a child. Snow White and Sleeping Beauty even make cameo appearances in this twisted interpretation of Disney's beloved characters.

Kate Middleton, a senior communications major who plays the witch, said what audiences remember from the fairy tales is deconstructed in "Into the Woods."

"Everyone's part is very stereotypical," Kate Middleton said. "Because of the changes within the second act, it turns (the characters) into real people. It's just a live-and-learn kind of play."

Almost all of the conversation in the play is done in song, so audiences should expect a fast-paced and fun show, Middleton said.

Tidwell said directing a musical has been quite a challenge, but most of the credit is due to the cast of veteran performers and Lab! newcomers. He also said Stage Manager Danny Green worked within a small budget to create the set's backdrop.

"In the tradition of 'Peter Pan,' 'Midsummer's' and very poor student theater, the set is going to have to be primarily out of the audience's imagination," Tidwell said. "We'll have suggestions of place. If we can get the audience to play pretend with us, then it will work."

Lee Chaix Katz, a senior and veteran of Lab! Theatre, encouraged audiences to be prepared for an entertaining show, but also to look out for subtext underneath the stories presented in the play.

"Yes, it's about fairy tales, but that doesn't mean it's fluff," Katz said. "It gets quite dark."

"Into the Woods" will be performed at 8:15 p.m. Friday through Monday. Matinees will run at 4 p.m. Monday and 5 p.m. Tuesday. All shows will be performed at Playmakers Theatre on Cameron Avenue and are free to the public.

The Arts & Entertainment Editor can be reached at artsdesk@unc.edu.

Show Delivers Broadway's Best Snippets

Pauper Players' will present samples of music, dance and drama from Broadway shows with similar themes.

By Robin Clemow
Staff Writer

For theatergoers with short attention spans, Pauper Players will take to the stage tonight with a smorgasbord of songs and dances.

The group's annual Broadway Melodies production gives audiences samples of moments from all-time favorite shows as well as scenes from the more obscure.

The performance is divided into four sets, each about 30 minutes in length, which mingle songs from various musicals that center on a theme.

Chris Hudson, publicity co-chairman and director of one of the sets, said the large number of tunes gives more performers a shot at being on stage.

"It's a great opportunity to do theater because it does have such a large cast," he said. "And it's a good way to get started in theater."

More freshmen and first-time performers are cast in Broadway Melodies than in Pauper Players' full shows, Hudson said.

Broadway Melodies has given freshman Carl Fisher the chance to dive into the UNC theater scene headfirst, singing three solos, including "Being



DTH CARA BRICKMAN

Members of Pauper Players rehearse the group's annual production of Broadway Melodies in the Hanes Art Center to prepare for their performance tonight. Freshman Carl Fisher (left) will sing three solos.

Alive" from "Company."

Fisher and sophomore Erin Frye, who will sing her first solo in the show tonight, explained how the directors of each set unified performances that included such a wide array of songs.

In one set, based on a theme of dating and relationships, Fisher said, Director Ivan Canada created a plot that incorporated all the tunes.

Frye's solo comes in a set about dreams, and Director Adam Kuykendal merges the pieces of this set together by juxtaposing the different angles of the theme.

As Frye sings "I Dreamed a Dream" from "Les Miserables," for example, her lines counter those of "Somewhere That's Green" from "Little Shop of Horrors." The two women both dream

of love, but one has the desires of a 1950s housewife and the other of a love-starved young woman.

Director and publicity co-chairman for Pauper Players David Lorenc said this year's show would display more diversity than those of the past.

"I remember last year there were two sets that had a love-related theme," he said. "This year is the first year we have done a dance set and one with a darker theme."

The latter, titled "A Shade Darker," includes "Morphine Tango" from "Kiss of the Spiderwoman" and other numbers about drugs, sex or violence.

Hudson directs the dance set, which will end the evening's performance, and he said it will leave the audience enlivened by tunes they might be famil-

iar with.

"It explores the dance themes of the '80s - footloose, flashdance and fame," he said, "and includes some of the big dances from Broadway."

Though it ends with these popular numbers, Hudson said the show's main purpose was to give the actors and the audience a chance to get to know more about Broadway.

"It's mainly about the singing and introducing people to shows they may not know about."

Broadway Melodies opens with shows at 8 p.m. today through Saturday and a 3 p.m. Sunday show in the Student Union Cabaret.

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'A Night in Paradise': Jazz Divas Jam to Benefit Black Cultural Center Fund Raising

By Russ Lane
Staff Writer

On Saturday, three gifted jazz musicians will lift their voices to benefit future programs for the Sonja H. Stone Black Cultural Center.

Titled "A Night in Paradise," the concert features three locally based but world-renowned jazz divas - Nnenna Freelon, Eve Cornelius and Lois

Dawson - performing together at Memorial Hall for the first time.

All three of the artists are headliners in their own right. Freelon received three Grammy nominations. Cornelius is the recipient of the BET Jazz Showcase. Dawson, a runner-up for the BET Jazz Showcase, is a 1981 UNC alumna and former BSM Gospel Choir soloist who balances her burgeoning jazz career with a full time job.

Each musician will perform individual sets before joining each other to sing a special version of "Lift Every Voice and Sing," the Negro National Anthem.

For local jazz aficionados, the concert is a dream come true. Acting BCC Director Harry Amana said the idea for the concert was entertained for years before the BCC organized the event.

"While this is a fund-raiser (for BCC programs), this concert was organized

more out of a desire to present these three artists together."

Dawson said she was happy to help raise programming funds for the BCC.

"This benefit is very special. There was talk about a freestanding BCC 20 years ago, so I'm very pleased and proud that people have kept this on the forefront of their minds," she said.

BCC Program Coordinator Lorie L. Clark said she was thrilled about the

concert. "It's exciting to have Nnenna, Eve and Lois come together for this concert. It says a lot for these world-traveling women to come back to their community for a concert that will benefit it."

This showcase is indicative of the BCC's mission. Clark said the benefit truly honors Dr. Stone's desire to promote positive change in the community.

"Dr. Stone was about the empowerment of all people, and music is one ele-

ment that crosses the color line. That's what we want to do (with this concert) - to reach out and touch the lives of other people."

"A Night in Paradise" will be held at 7 p.m. Saturday in Memorial Hall. Tickets are available at the Carolina Union Box Office.

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