

# Original musical to open

by David White  
Staff Writer

It is a rare occasion when Chapel Hill is fortunate enough to witness the birth of an original musical production. Such is the case with the premier of *Diamond Studs*, a musical comedy, written by UNC graduate Jim Wann, to be presented at the Ranch House Thursday through Monday, Oct. 14.

Based on a factual account of the life of Jesse James, *Diamond Studs* incorporates the largest room in the Ranch House as an authentic Old West backdrop for the show. John Haber, also a UNC graduate, directs the company—a group of local musicians who hope to head for New York after their Chapel Hill debut.

Tickets, on sale at the Record Bar, are \$2 for all shows except the \$10 dinner show at 7 p.m. Saturday. Curtain is at 9 p.m. Thursday and Friday, 11:30 p.m. Saturday and 8 p.m. Sunday and Monday.

Haber describes the play as a "story about the South, the War between the States, and Reconstruction."

"Jesse is famous but no one knows anything about him. This account is more factual than any film or television study," Haber said.

The highlight of the saloon show is the music of two area bands, Southern States Fidelity Choir and the Red Clay Ramblers. The members of these two groups help to make up the 14 member cast and play 12 instruments between them.

Jim Wann, who wrote the script and lyrics, became interested in Jesse James several years ago and read dozens of James' biographies. Portraying the lead



N.Y. choreographer Patricia Birch and playwright Jim Wann observe rehearsals of the soon-to-premiere musical 'Diamond Studs'

in this production, Wann is also a well-known local singer and poet, author of the 1972 Carolina Repertory Company production *The Wonderful O*.

Haber is remembered for his production last year of *The Roar of the Greasepaint*. A co-founder of the Carolina Repertory and founder of the Tanglewood Children's Theatre in Asheville, Haber spent three months in Europe studying theatre production and recently worked on a show at Washington's Arena Theatre.

Choreographer for *Diamond Studs* is Patricia Birch, who did the original choreography for the New York production of *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*, *Grease*, *The Me Nobody Knows*, and others.



Photo by Bill Mills

Bland Simpson, another former UNC student, wrote the score for the 11 musical numbers that keep the two act "horse opera" flowing from scene to scene. He also plays piano in the Southern States Fidelity Choir and recently recorded *Simpson*, an album on Columbia records.

The show opens with Jesse as a young man and follows his life up to the moment when he is shot in the back at age 35. En route Jesse encounters Pinkerton detectives, irate sheriffs and mobs of angry citizens as he blazes across the West in a rip-roaring, foot-stomping avalanche.

Other members of the cast include Red Clay Ramblers Thommy Thompson, Jim Watson, Bill Hicks and Mike Craver. The three musician-actors of the Southern States Fidelity Choir are Jan Davidson, John Foley and Mike Sheehan. Filling the female roles are Madelyn Smoak and Cindy Gooch Huntley. Frances Tamburro and Scott Bradley are also in the cast.

# Nabokov recasts image

by Gary Chambliss  
Book Reviewer

'Look at the Harlequins,' by Vladimir Nabokov  
McGraw-Hill, \$7.95.

Vladimir Nabokov once said it took him "twenty or thirty years to reinvent Europe." In actuality, Nabokov refashions life as he perceives it to reflect his personal egocentric world. He loves turning the world on its head, giving us a Europe or an America not quite like the real thing.

In *Look at the Harlequins!*, he works this same transformation on himself, giving us a mock version of his own life through the character of Vadim Vadimovich—Russian exile, author, world traveler and collector of words.

As always, Nabokov deals with the unusual. At the beginning of the book, Vadim meets and marries the lovely Iris, a deaf mute so shy "she could not make herself learn to read male lips." Iris is soon killed in the kind of grotesque and fortuitous accident with which Nabokov so often dispatches his characters. She is murdered on a Paris street by a madman while her husband fumbles for taxi change. Other wives and other accidents follow, but Vadim is content to meditate on his life and art.

If this is autobiography, it is certainly autobiography knocked awry, a kind of fun-house mirror held up to life. Nabokov, for instance, collects butterflies; Vadimovich despises them. Nabokov wrote *Laughter in the Dark*; Vadimovich retaliates with *Slaughter in the Sun*. Vadimovich finds himself being constantly mistaken for "that other writer" whose works and life bear such a curious resemblance to his own. "Should I ignore the coincidence?" he wonders. "Should I abandon my art, choose another line of achievement, take up chess seriously, or become, say, a

lepidopterist?..." This cat-and-mouse game between author and character goes on throughout the book. At times, it seems only a matter of pages before they will actually bump into each other.

Nabokov often seems to be writing the same novel again and again. *Look at the Harlequins!* is no exception. The themes that obsessed him when he began writing in 1925 remain with him today. His characters are fascinated by time and memory; his novels skip back and forth, often ending where they began. It is not unusual for Nabokov to introduce a character by telling you the day on which she will die 25 years later. The sudden fragrance of a flower will remind someone of a garden he walked through 50 years before.

In *Look at the Harlequins!* this obsession with time is transformed into an obsession with space. Vadim is constantly boring visitors with his descriptions of a dream in which he cannot mentally reverse his step. When he finally succeeds in doing so, he has a nervous breakdown.

This repetition of themes is both Nabokov's major strength and his major weakness. It allows him to polish his imagery until it shimmers, but it may also give avid readers of Nabokov an unpleasant feeling of *deja vu*.

All the usual Nabokov targets are offered in the book: academicians, Marxists, Freudian quacks. There is, for instance, the husband-and-wife team of psychiatrists who spend their Sundays analyzing each other on the beach and the enthusiastic scholar whose extensive footnoting eventually obliterates the text he is editing.

But it is not real life which most interests Nabokov. He is not interested in things, but in the names for things. His books are drenched with the texture of words, with lyrical description, with the new way of saying the old thing.

When Nabokov reinvents the world, he does so by renaming it.

# KALEIDOSCOPE

## Forum

Psychic Richard Wolf will speak at 7:30 p.m. today in room 202-204 of the Union. Free to the public.  
Dr. Zhorez A. Medvedev will speak at 8:15 p.m. Thursday in Duke University's Page Auditorium. Admission is free.

## Music

Music at 8 p.m. today in the Union snack bar with Jim Taylor and Howard Sheppard. Also, at 8 p.m. Thursday in the Union snack bar by Don Karl, bagpipes; Piedmont Possum Hunters and Trenton Lowe, guitarist. Free to the public.  
New York composer John Watts will open the Composers-Concerts season at 8 p.m. Thursday in Hill Hall. Free to the public.  
The YM-YWCA will sponsor "The Bohemian Outdoor Cafe" from 7 to 11:30 p.m. Thursday in the Y-Court. Live entertainment

## Cinema

"Five on the Black Hand Side"—It's about a middle-class family ruled by an autocratic father and the repercussions which occur when Mama finds out about women's liberation and decides it's gonna work for her, too. Her sons and daughter take the cue and begin to assert themselves, as well, and Papa starts losing his rule in the roost. Today and Thursday, at 6, 8 and 10 p.m., \$1.50, the Alternative Cinema, Greenlaw Auditorium.  
"San Quentin"—A Warner Brothers crime drama with Humphrey Bogart in the pen and Ann Sheridan waiting, outside. This was Bogart's first penitentiary story, although the elements became nearly standard for later epics, including Pat O'Brien's role as the wise counselor, entreating the criminals to go straight. (Carolina, Thursday at 1 and 4 p.m., \$1.50 or by subscription.)  
"Alfredo, Alfredo"—An extremely funny

comedy starring Dustin Hoffman—once again miraculous—as an Italian trying to extricate himself from a neurotic wife and an insane marriage. (Carolina at 7:10 & 9:10 p.m., \$2.25.)  
"Serpico"—Frank Serpico's story is tense and exciting in its frustrating documentation of a honest cop trying to expose all the rotteness in N.Y.P.D., but Sidney Lumet's movie doesn't give us any other characters to work around. Al Pacino, however, is fascinating in the title role. (Varsity, at 1, 3, 5, 7 & 9 p.m., \$2.25.)  
"That's Entertainment"—That's 130 minutes of highly enjoyable strolling through movie musical history. Lots of truly great numbers, not a single boring one. See it. (Plaza 2, at 2, 4:30, 7 & 9:30 p.m., \$2.25.)  
"Juggernaut"—"The Three Musketeers" director Richard Lester takes on a Poseidon adventure about a bomber working within a luxury liner. (Plaza 1, at 3, 5, 7 & 9 p.m., \$2.25.)  
"Summer of '42" and "Class of '44"—A touching nostalgia piece and its bastard son. Sequels will be sequels. (Plaza 3 at 3:05 & 7:05 p.m., \$2.25.)

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