

'Ladyhouse' spirited but overly melodramatic

By ANN SMALLWOOD
Arts Editor

"When you're standin' there hurtin' so bad you could die, an' you know you won't, that's the blues."

Playwright Kevin O'Morrison who wrote *Ladyhouse Blues*, which the Carolina Union is presenting in conjunction with the Fine Arts Festival, said this old St. Louis saying sums up what his play is all about.

True enough. But what makes the play especially notable is not its tragedy; rather, the play stands out because of its realistic balance of elements of both tragedy and comedy.

Ladyhouse Blues is set in St. Louis just as World War I is drawing to a close. The city, for years empty of men, is beginning to be refilled. And the prospect of this glorious return has enlivened the Madden household (five women) with the excitement of change.

This is what the play is about. Not about wallowing in sorrow, but coping with change. And in August 1919, as Mama Liz Madden says frequently, "The whole world's comin' unglued." Without a doubt it is Mama Madden who is holding her world, her family, together, and it is Martha Nell Hardy in the role of the matriarch who holds this production together. The play, though somewhat slow starting, obviously bursts into life with the vibrant energy of Hardy's entrance.

Hardy's masterful acting controlled both the players and the

Cinema

audience throughout. She could tease laughter out of the crowd with single words, especially her wonderful mispronunciations of "foreign" words like "Bolshevikies" and "DE-troit."

The play is full of such provincial naivete, perhaps too much. *Ladyhouse Blues* is far different from the current "modern" trends in drama, without the intellectual obscurity of plays by writers like Pinter, Stoppard or Albee. It is pure Americana, and as such entertaining.

Ladyhouse Blues is about a time before supermarkets, when housewives bought ice by the 100 pounds and fresh fish and vegetables from vendors in the street, when a pound of sugar (on sale) sold for 9 cents, when appearing in front of one's own sisters in a floor-length nightgown was considered to be somewhat immodest and when electric lights and telephones were still, at best, creatures to be distrusted.

Though O'Morrison's historical references and political issues are meticulously accurate, it became a bit tiresome to be regularly subjected to oratory about particular trends of the period—from righteous indignation at inflation and bigotry to jokes about President Wilson and the "gover'mint."

The characterizations of the four Madden daughters were noticeably handicapped by their association with these different ideas and cultural factions. They represent such obviously contrived and diverse types that it was far from disturbing that the Madden family might soon disband. They never seemed to fit together to begin with.

Suellen Herstine gives an outstanding performance, however, as the eldest Madden daughter, Helen. Stricken with tuberculosis (of course, a reminder of the greater physical vulnerability of pre-vaccine-age America), Helen is the family's emotional backbone and guardian of morality. Unlike the saccharine Beth in a similar setting (Alcott's *Little Women*), Herstine as Helen has a peevish humanity which gives her character credibility.

Patricia Strauss, as the youngest daughter, Eylie, also gives a good, believable performance. Her portrayal of the headstrong 16-year-old is sincere and energetic, if not entirely polished.

The other two daughters, Dot, the New York sophisticate, and Terry, the women's rights activist, are really such flat types that there was really little actresses Laura Walker (Dot) and Lisa Whalin (Terry) could do to flesh them out.

Walker seems to float through her scenes as a frilly white blur. Dot is soft spoken and afflicted with an oddly pretentious accent.

Whalin has the difficult and noxious task of embodying the issue of feminism. As Terry, newly elected the representative to a women's conference in Washington, she must spout off hackneyed rhetoric that would make the most devout bloomer



Actresses from 'Ladyhouse Blues'

...shows tonight, Saturday in Great Hall. Although the play teeters on the brink of melodrama or documentary at times, it inevitably bounces back to an effective naturalism. Director Linda Wright handled this potential problem, along with the physical limitations of the wide, shallow acting area with admirable polish.

Altogether, *Ladyhouse Blues* provides a satisfying evening of entertainment, while dealing with the problems of women living together without men in old St. Louis.

BBC producer to explain Shakespeare series today

By THOMAS JESSIMAN
Staff Writer

Cedric Messina, the producer of the British Broadcasting Company Corp.'s project to air all 37 of Shakespeare's plays, will give a short lecture and videotape presentation of his work at 8 p.m. tonight in 101 Greenlaw Hall.

Messina is a guest speaker for the UNC Fine Arts Festival. "I have come to America because the Fine Arts Festival very kindly asked me to come," Messina said.

"I thought of the series while I was directing a play at Glamis Castle in Glasgow a few years ago," Messina said.

"It took two years to set up and it will take six years in all to finish the project," Messina said.

BBC has completed eight of the plays and six already have been released. The plays that already have been shown in England and are now being

shown in the United States are *Julius Caesar*, *As You Like It*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard II*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Henry VIII*.

The total cost of the production will be close to \$14 million, Messina said.

"There will be almost 1,000 speaking parts from the 37 plays," Messina said. "Most of the actors are from London."

Messina has been on the staff of the BBC for 18 years, and this is his fifth trip to America.

A videotape of excerpts from the first six plays will be shown at the presentation tonight. The videotape was collated by WNET television.

Slides also will be shown and afterward Messina will answer questions from the audience.

"We are hoping there will be some lively discussion with the questions and answers," said Andrew Fair, a representative of the Fine Arts Festival.



Cedric Messina
...on Shakespeare



A Touching trio

Touch, a mime trio from Carrboro's Art School, will present a special performance for children at 11 a.m. Saturday in Memorial Hall. The performance is part of the Fine Arts Festival.

Tuba workshop held Saturday

The UNC music department is sponsoring a day-long tuba and euphonium symposium Saturday in Hill Hall, followed by a 7:30 p.m. concert by the UNC Wind Ensemble.

The symposium, which will include master classes, recitals and clinics conducted by guest soloists, primarily is directed toward high school band leaders and players, says David Reed, tubist and assistant professor of music at UNC.

Reed will conduct the Wind Ensemble in their 7:30 concert in Hill Hall Auditorium. Guest soloists performing are Harvey Phillipias, tubist and professor of music at Indiana University; Brian Bowman, euphonium soloist with the U.S. Air Force Band; and David Lewis, a N.C. Symphony tubist and tuba euphonium instructor at UNC-Greensboro.

The date of the program and concert was incorrectly reported last week by the *Tar Heel*, as being on Saturday, March 18. The event will take place this Saturday.

The *Daily Tar Heel* regrets this error.

Acting Company here

Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare's classic tragedy of young love, will be presented by the Acting Company at 8 p.m. Sunday in Memorial Hall.

The Acting Company, under the artistic direction of John Houseman, has won a national reputation for excellence from its tours to colleges and towns across the country.

Tickets, \$4 reserved and \$3 general public, are on sale at the Carolina Union desk.

From UNC, the company will move on to N.C. State University in Raleigh where they will give two more performances of *Romeo and Juliet*, at 8 p.m. Monday and Tuesday in Stewart Theatre.

Also, the company will perform *Broadway*, a revival of a 1920s farce about the Prohibition era, at 8 p.m. Friday, March 30, and at 3 p.m. Saturday, March 31.

The third play the Acting Company will produce during its week-long residence at N.C. State will be Jean Anouilh's *Antigone*. The play, written in 1944 by the French playwright, is a modern adaptation of the Greek classic by Sophocles. *Antigone* will be presented at 3 and 8 p.m. Sunday, April 1.

For information about tickets to the N.C. State performances, call Stewart Theatre at 737-3105.

Classical music

The Philadelphia Orchestra will perform at 8 p.m. today and Saturday in N.C. State University's Reynolds Coliseum in Raleigh.

The performance, the last in the N.C. State Friends of the College series, will feature a balanced repertoire of classics. Eugene Ormandy will conduct.

Admission is by season ticket or individual tickets (\$2) available at the door.

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- 3:00 HOWARD STEIN**
Lecture—"The Future of Dramatic Training Programs in the U.S." Graham Memorial Lounge.
- 7:00** Reception for "PROCESS IN PERFORMANCE" ARTISTS at the Art School in Carrboro.
- 8:00 CEDRIC MESSINA**
Lecture and Tape Presentation 101 Greenlaw.
- 8:00 LADYHOUSE BLUES**
Great Hall. Co-sponsored by Carolina Union.

SATURDAY, MARCH 24

- 11:00 TOUCH a.m.** A special mime performance for children. Memorial Hall.
- 2:00 TOUCH**
A mime performance. Memorial Hall.
- 2:00 HANS HAACKE**
Lecture—"My Work and Its Social Frame." Room 115, Ackland Art Center. Slide Presentation.
- 3:00** Workshop with the Touch Mime Troupe. In the Women's Gym. Register in advance at Union Desk.
- 4:00 NTOZAKE SHANGE**
Lecture—"Black Theatre: Tradition and Future," followed by an informal discussion. Graham Memorial Lounge.
- 7:00 AN EVENING OF THE BLUES**
A traditional art form performed by local soloists in a relaxed atmosphere. Gerrard Hall.
- 8:00 LADYHOUSE BLUES**
Great Hall. Co-sponsored by Carolina Union.

SUNDAY, MARCH 24

- 2:00** A reading of children's literature by Daphne Athas, Max Steele, others. Old Well.
- 8:00 NTOZAKE SHANGE**
Reading and Performance. Paul Green Theatre.

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