

# Lab's romantic plot goes disco

By **BOBBY PARKER**  
Staff Writer

**Problem:** Take your basic 18th century romantic comedy, devise an original, modern concept of staging it, and don't disturb its built-in, sure-fire audience appeal.

**Solution:** Leave alone what you can't improve on and be subtle with the originality.

The play is Carlo Goldoni's *The Servant of Two Masters*, a UNC Laboratory Theatre production that opened the 1979-80 season Thursday afternoon in Graham Memorial.

The concept of originality chosen by director Dan Scuro, an associate professor in the UNC drama department,

was disco-ization. Yet the meaning of the comedia dell arte-style script remained intact.

The disco-ization process includes playing disco music before the show, during intermission and even at ending with a make-shift disco dance. But real transformation of Goldoni's work is not through these nuances but in the projection of what one might call a disco attitude.

*The Servant of Two Masters* concerns itself with little more than bringing fun and happiness to its characters and its audience. Disco strives for the same, so the combination is entirely logical.

More important, the combination points unequivocally to the timelessness

of Goldoni's script. It's the basic boy-meets-girl formula with sufficient elements of the love-struck, the heartbroken and, finally, the happily ever after.

Goldoni's story is modernized by presenting the characters as stereotypes of today's world.

The title character, Truffaldino (Steve Beach), is a rouge who could charm his way out of any situation.

There's also a mobster (Fairley Grimes), a "today's woman" (Cynthia Wood), an effeminate chef (Tony Mace) and a college prep (Doug Lorie), as well as an assortment of other stock characters.

The disco-ization is personified in the resident disco queen, Clarice (Carree Renee), the young, sweet ingenue that everyone knows and loves.

Costuming is the major tool used to present these stock characters, and it is indeed employed with originality.

Clarice wears disco skates, the mobster sports a pin-striped suit, the prep is dressed "just so" and (my favorite) Clarice's betrothed, a rather starchy, conformist sort, is a West Point cadet.

Beach, as Truffaldino, squeezes all manner of affection out of his character as he tries to worm his way out of sticky situations. After all, he's only a "poor man... an honest, good-looking man and full of wit" (his own description). He's a delightful little scoundrel.

Doug Lorie as Florindo, the college prep, sets a solid characterization with false *savoir faire* and a knowing look through the eyebrows.

Keith Hoffman as Clarice's lover and Sarah Johnson as the family maid also produce good characters.

*The Servant of Two Masters*, will play at 8 p.m. today and Saturday in the Lab Theatre (in the basement of Graham Memorial). Admission is free.



Dan Scuro directs this Lab Theatre production...Carlo Goldoni's 'A Servant of Two Masters'

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Marinda McPherson will tell you she was born "on the muddy bank of the Eno River in the early 1900's," and taught in the Hillsborough public schools for nearly 40 years, but even though she's retired from teaching, she hasn't slowed down.

She and her husband David have retired from teaching, she hasn't slowed down.

recently moved back into the house he built for her when they were married, and McPherson now spends her time singing, teaching, and telling people about her culture.

Attending public school in Hillsborough and then St. Augustine's College in Raleigh, McPherson had much more schooling than most people at that time. "My father was killed on the Pennsylvania Railroad, and there was a division in money after he died," she says. "Mr. Frank Nash, who was lieutenant governor, made arrangements for me to go to college."

She graduated from Cheyney Teachers

College in Cheyney, Pa., and then received a master's degree in curriculum and teaching from Columbia University.

It was during her school years that McPherson met a great variety of people. "People would send to Cheyney and ask for people to live and work in their home," she says. She lived with Quakers in the Pocono Mountains, with Huguenots in Atlantic City, and with a family in Westchester, Pa.

"That's where I got some of my ideas about learning—from well-learned people," McPherson says. "That's part of the greatness of education. I learned even more with people who knew. By living and working and traveling with them. There's nothing to compare with that foundation learning, it just keeps me reaching."

Music has always been important in her life, McPherson said. "It must have started with going to church with my grandmother," she says. "I would listen in church and would sing as best as I could follow the words and what I thought the words were. I made songs from the words they taught me and sang nearly all the hymns. At least I would hit at them. I was two or three years old, and the old people thought I could sing. They would come to me and ask me to sing."

McPherson made her singing debut at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia in

1930 at the National Negro Music Festival.

"I began singing for weddings, funerals, and special events at church and school," she said. In Chapel Hill, she was introduced to Frank Porter Graham and performed in his program for the first University exchange students from South America.

Then, in the early '60s, she recorded two albums, "Inspirational Song," and "Spreading Joy."

McPherson describes herself as a collector of curios and of images. She's also an artist, doing macrame and sculpturing animals from paper. "I do animals as I see them," she says. Animals are smarter than humans. They have more aptness and stick with it.

"Everybody seems to do what God tells them except man. That's because we're number three. The earth was here first, then the animals, and man was third."

McPherson has a strong sense of her own history. "My grandmother's name was Marinda Hart Latta. She was sold into Hillsborough from Chatham, and some Spanish people kept her. That's how her name and my name came to be Marinda."

"Cultural forms really make a difference. My experience has taught me to think and feel with the group I'm with. It's all music, and music is immortal."

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