

Arts

'Cherry Orchard' blooms in PlayMakers' production

Chekhov just might have been proud of the PlayMakers Repertory Company's version of his play "The Cherry Orchard."

Chekhov, when he wrote the play, intended for it to be a comedy. However, Konstantin Stanislavski, the Russian director and dramatic coach, first produced "The Cherry Orchard" as a ponderous tear-jerker.

The PlayMakers' version relies on a different approach, mixing humor and tragedy in a way that makes the play both funny and moving. Instead of trying to make the play melodramatic, this production uses both comedy and tragedy in conjunction.

The result is real characters lost in a world they do not understand. We pity some of them, we laugh at all of them, and in the end we are moved.

The play takes place in Russia 50 years after the emancipation of the

Hasie Sirisena

Theatre

Russian serfs in 1861. The Russia that the play portrays has been scarred by the political and economic chaos it has been thrust into.

The characters, like the country, struggle in turmoil, but cannot do what is necessary to save themselves.

Lyubov, who owns the cherry orchard and the house, is in debt. If she cannot pay the money back, she will lose her land, but she is too childish and too lost to accomplish what is necessary to save her estate.

Lopakhin is the young, wealthy businessman who has risen from his peasant background to the status of nouveau riche. He doesn't know how

to deal with his new-found wealth, and suffers with guilt because he feels he doesn't deserve it.

The rest of the characters are, in their own ways, trying to deal with the changes they see around them.

Gayev, Lyubov's brother, and Anya and Varya, Lyubov's daughters, try to deal with the realization that life as they once knew it cannot exist.

Pytor, a young student, has to reconcile his own Marxist beliefs with his sympathy — even grudging admiration — for Lyubov and Lopakhin.

Firs, the old butler, is the only real remnant from the past. Though he has been free for at least 50 years, he still hasn't left the family. He is comic, tragic and the only truly admirable character in the play.

The production manages to portray the great complexities of the characters

in a simple, unpretentious manner, saving the play from becoming a muddy puddle of human foibles.

One of the greatest pitfalls of "The Cherry Orchard" for dramatists is the self-involvement of the characters. The characters live in their own world, and they refuse to see what is happening outside.

It is too easy to misunderstand Chekhov, and to make the characters so wrapped up in themselves that they don't interact. In the PlayMakers' production however, there was never the sense that these characters weren't at least trying to talk to each other. They might have been miserably incapable of making themselves heard, but they did try.

The comedy was also deftly interwoven into the production. Instead of conventional humor where characters

consciously try to be funny, Chekhov relies more on the incongruity of everyday speech and action. The PlayMakers production managed to carry this off very well. The actors delivered their comic lines naturally without drawing attention to themselves. We laugh at the sheer absurdity of what they are saying, but we also recognize the tragedy in how the characters never understand what they have just said.

Chekhov also relies on pratfalls and other physical humor. In this production, it isn't overdone and works well, for the most part.

The acting as a whole was very good. Sheridan Thomas managed to do a wonderful job balancing the childlike vulnerability of Lyubov with her licentious sensuality. Lyubov became a character that we could sympathize with even if we could not admire her.

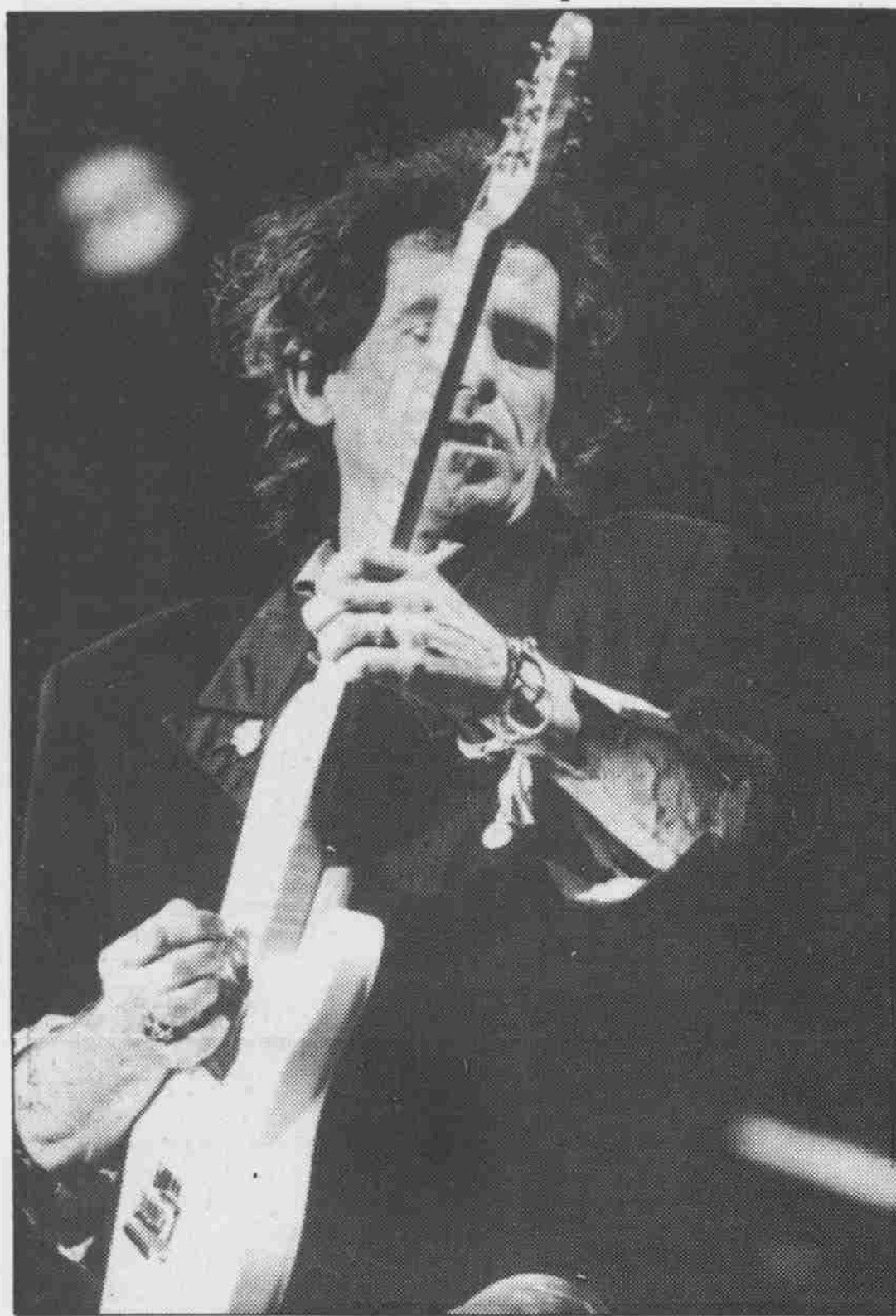
Ray Dooley also did a convincing job as Lopakhin, juggling the character's guilt and triumph in a believable way.

Earle Edgerton did an adequate job with Gayev, but his portrayal seemed to make Gayev too strong without emphasizing the stagnation and ineffectiveness of his character.

Jim Hillgartner, however, did the best job of all. His Firs was lovable and oddly admirable; in the end, when the family left Firs behind, the audience responded with a soft but audible protestation.

PlayMakers Repertory Company will present Anton Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard" through Oct. 8 in the Paul Green Theater. Performances are held at 8 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and at 2 p.m. on Sundays.

Stones satisfy crowd with shattering performance



DTH/David Surowiecki

Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards jams during a solo

Few bands could live up to the advance billing that the Rolling Stones have received for the 1989 Steel Wheels tour, but Saturday night at Carter-Finley Stadium, the Stones came through again.

Despite the threats of rain, inadequate parking and predictions of 30,000 ticketless fans, the concert was a complete triumph. The Stones have never been known as the consummate live rock 'n' roll act, but what they lack in musicality, they make up in presence. After almost 30 years, the 1989 Stones sounded as good as ever, putting on a simply amazing show.

Opening act Living Colour didn't seem troubled by touring with a bunch of legendary rockers. The band delivered a searing but underappreciated 45-minute set featuring most of the material from the band's debut, *Vivid*. Lead singer Corey Glover was in fine form, cementing his reputation as the man with the most exciting hair in rock 'n' roll.

Some had said that Living Colour were immobile onstage during this tour but, thankfully, such reports were false. The frontmen made use of the huge stage, prowling about throughout their set, particularly during the finale, "Cult of Personality." "Open Letter to a Landlord" was dedicated to the college students in the audience, who, Glover said, have a chance to "do something about the world."

Following an act as exciting as Living Colour is a difficult task, even for the Rolling Stones. But the Stones had visual impact on their side, with a massive set exceeding 250 feet in width and 130 feet in height — so large, in fact, as to require aircraft collision lights. The stage was surrounded by gigantic Metropolitan-style industrial structures, much in the vein of the *Steel Wheels* album cover.

Shielded by massive amounts of

Brian Springer

Concert

smoke, in the glow of a string of blue lights, the band came onstage to a tape of the Master Musicians of Jajouka (featured on "Continental Drift" from *Steel Wheels*). An explosion broke the rapidly increasing tension, and the Stones launched into "Start Me Up," followed by "Bitch."

Wearing blue-green tails and strutting energetically, lead singer Mick Jagger seemed like something out of a time warp. Keith Richards played guitar from the elbow in his usual style, fellow guitarist Ron Wood grinning contentedly behind. Bassist Bill Wyman and drummer Charlie Watts, though the most consistent musicians of the band, were decidedly non-visual, keeping the rest of the band on the musical track. On the fringes of the stage were saxophonist Bobby Keys; keyboard players Matt Clifford and Chuck Leavell; and backing vocalists Lisa Fischer, Bernard Fowler and Cindy Mizelle.

The show featured numerous gimmicks, including inflatable "Honky Tonk Women" more than 55 feet tall on both sides of the stage. During "Sympathy for the Devil," Jagger appeared near the top of the stage left scaffold, surrounded by flames. "2,000 Light Years from Home" was the most strikingly visual tune, with exquisite use of multi-colored light beams and smoke. "It's Only Rock 'n' Roll" made use of the video monitors, accompanied by still photos of rock legends such as Chuck Berry and Fats Domino.

Aside from the elaborate side effects, most of the show was simply straightforward rock. The band ripped through songs such as "Brown Sugar," "Tumbling Dice," "You Can't Always Get What You Want" and "Midnight Rambler." Jagger played the guitar on several occasions, as in "Undercover (of the Night)." Richards was featured in a "solo" set (the band seems to translate "solo" as "without Mick"), singing

"Before They Make Me Run" and "Happy." "Satisfaction" was the traditional audience sing-along and "Jumpin' Jack Flash" the encore.

If Richards rules the Stones' records, Jagger commands the concerts. Whether strolling across the stage in a red coat during "Paint It Black" or "shaking his tailfeather" in "Harlem Shuffle," Jagger was the focal point of practically every song. Richards and Wood, though they performed remarkably well for the first few songs, sounded ragged towards the end. Richards' solo in "Sympathy for the Devil" did not do justice to the original. However, the band had a garage sound that was fitting for such tunes as "Satisfaction."

Side note: In Living Colour's set, Corey Glover wisely did not address the issue of college loyalty. Jagger made a mistake when he assumed a large N.C. State presence. Making the comment, "I suppose you like the Wolfpack," he received resounding boos. He immediately followed with, "All right, forget I said that." Obviously, there were quite a few Tar Heels in the audience.

For two and a half hours (no breaks!), the Stones rolled on, putting to rest any question of stamina. Despite being billed as a tour celebrating the 1989 Rolling Stones, the set contained only three songs from the band's latest album. Some of the song choices were surprising, with some classics being noticeably absent from the performance, such as "Under My Thumb" and "Let's Spend the Night Together." This made the set stronger, though, truly taking the show's quality a step forward.

The deafening applause and fireworks following the show were Stones traditions, further establishing the concert as an event. In all honesty, few people see the Rolling Stones simply to listen to music. Instead, fans want to participate in the experience of a Stones concert. This was probably the musical highlight of 1989, as it is rare when an event actually lives up to its billing. After all, it wasn't only rock 'n' roll; it was the Stones!

24-7 Spyz mixes funk, hard-core

By CARRIE McLAREN

Staff Writer

You've got raders in every corner of the dorm room, right? Now tune 'em all to different stations and play 'em at the same time.

Such is 24-7 Spyz' method of telling the music caste system where to go. Out of a mind-set that bred Bad Brains and Living Colour, 24-7 Spyz thrash and bash while they hiphop.

The Spyz coalesced in 1986 in New York City. Saturating the local club scene helped the band cull a following. The core of the Spyz, however, didn't flesh out until they began to play Sunday matinees at CBGB's. The modest New York pub that had launched the careers of Blondie and the Ramones years earlier, thus helping to define punk, now served a hard-core outlet. The underage crowd not admitted to weekend events sought euphoria on alcohol-free (eh hem) afternoons.

Even with hard-core demagogues Minor Threat and Agnostic Front competing for stage dives, the Spyz' fusion fit the atmosphere. Fellow scenesters Bad Brains and Fishbone had already worked to break down the barrier between speed and funk. As a result, a crowd often categorized as neo-Nazis swarmed the Spyz' gigs in supportive if intense frenzies.

Connections with fanzines and members of the hard-core neighborhood led the Spyz to sign with In-Effect Records, home to Agnostic Front, Raw Deal and the Prong. The current lineup — including guitarist Jimi Hazel, bassist Rick Skatore, drummer Anthony Johnson and vocalist Peter Fluid — released a debut LP, *Harder Than You*, last winter. Without looking to thrashin' labelmates for directions, *Harder Than You* lives up to its name. No, this isn't hard-core. Neither is it entirely unfamiliar (I smell chili peppers). But despite a slight case of deja voodoo, the Spyz succeed in their pot-luck funk 'n' roll.

"Ballots Not Bullets" should serve as inspiration to reggae-makers determined to out-Marley Marley without braving new rhythms. A cappella harmonies decorate a plea for democracy. Kool and the Gang's "Jungle Boogie" kicks off side two, complete with swampy introduction. It's enough to convince me that disco lives (of course, I never suspected otherwise). The song was even released as a 12-inch single with four remixes, including a house version.

"Pillage" shows what happens when the Spyz' mesh goes askew. Trying to incorporate every style at once may be adventurous, but it's not exactly easy on the ears. Eclecticism can be a vice.

On the other hand, "Tango Skin Polka" spins a tune that would send a metalhead to cloggin' heaven. You'll really have to stretch the imagination to figure a neater blend of cheap square dancing, hard-core and polka.

Now, before I mention the social-action lyrics and recommend an acclaimed show tonight, I feel obligated to warn the morally upright that "Spill My Guts" contains blatant sexism. Rather than wreaking havoc by printing the objectionable lyrics, I'll leave it to the imagination with the forewarning that a bit of protesting might be in order. After all, what can you expect from a band that thanks both Jesus Christ and Murphy's Law in the liner notes?

24-7 Spyz will play tonight at Cat's Cradle on Franklin Street. Cover is \$6. Atlanta's *Naked Truth* will open. The show begins around 10. For more information, 967-9053.

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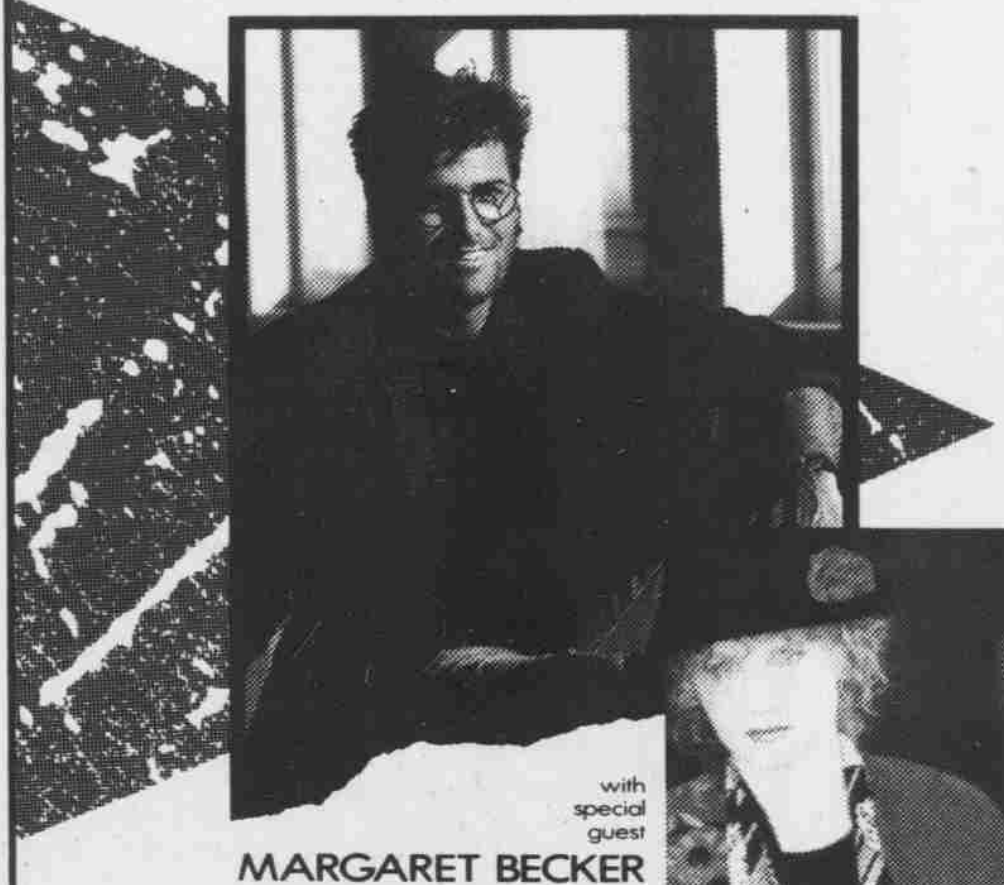


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