

ARTS

Walterdale show *Fantastick*

The Fantasticks
Walterdale Theatre
December 16-23, 1982
by Charmaine Roux

This marvelous musical was exactly the type of entertainment needed by Edmonton audiences in the cold, often lonely Christmas season.

Walterdale Theatre, an amateur production company, created a surprisingly polished performance and is to be heartily congratulated.

Acting and singing in this production are excellent. Miss Kim Mattice (Luisa) is a fine, promising young singer, though her voice was rather raspy in spots. She and Sanders Whiting (Matt) conveyed romantic, impatient youth with sincerity, charm and appeal. Their singing complemented one another.

Jim Dougall (Hucklebee) and David Stewart (Bellamy) gave fine stylish performances as two fathers attempting to manipulate their children's futures. Ray Phipps was rather still as El Gallo. His acting lacked dramatic flair and spontaneity befitting the dashing character. His singing voice is good though, and his presence commanding as mentor, commentator and oracle.

Henry and Mortimer (played respectively by Bud D'Amur and Len Osborne) were acted in rather slapstick, exaggerated style although their performances were, on the whole, quite humorous. The mute, played by Heather Christie, was charming.

Matt and Luisa love each other, and think falsely that their parents do not approve the match. The two fathers hire El Gallo and his two underlings to enact a phoney kidnapping of Luisa. Matt rescues her from the villains in a swordplay scene. Luisa and Matt are united only to find the illusions of each others' perfections shattered.

What struck me most was the show's ingeniously simple set. Covered mostly by foam, it evoked the illusion of a fairy-tale atmosphere and a misty aura of

timelessness. This singular set was composed of a house frame, swing, tree and shed, which doubled as the neighbors' house and an entrance and exit for the two brigands. The house was covered by foam and the flowers were made from foam. The tree the actors climbed was foam-coated; even he glasses through which Luisa views an illusionary world, were covered by foam. In a curious paradox, the foam-like props were remarkably real in their imagery, conveying to the audience the illusion of a symbolic world of fantasy and truth.

Although this play may be enjoyed as only a simple love story, it equally may be viewed on a more complex level. Luisa and Matt fall in love in idealistic fashion and are disillusioned and embittered when they are confronted with their own realistic natures. In a larger sense, this play tells us that there are no idealized realities in life, no perfect physical setting no place in the world where happiness "is".

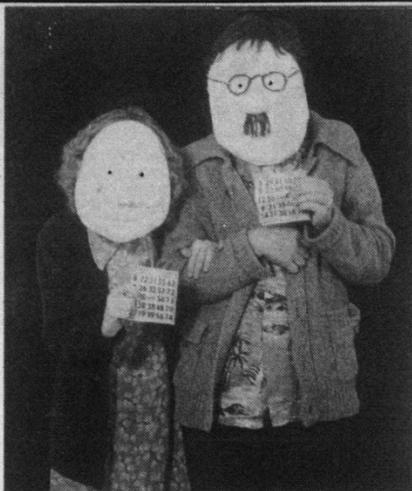
The musical warmth of the play combined with humorous insights into human nature rendered *the Fantasticks* a wonderfully joyous play for the Christmas season.

Nutcracker falls short of expectations

by Ninette Gironella

The *Nutcracker*, a perennially popular Christmas ballet, is a magical event full of wonder. Unfortunately, the Alberta Ballet Company failed to capture this magic and enthrall the audience. This was a disappointment both for the people who see only the *Nutcracker* during the entire ballet season, and for long-time watchers of the Company who have come to expect better performances.

Most obvious were some of the technical errors, from both the dancers and the stage crew. Alejandro Menandez overacted to the point where instead of appearing dramatic he became a comic.



Old bingo players, en masque

Warm a January night with *One Beautiful Evening*.

Small Change Theatre, Edmonton's newest professional company, has responded to popular demand and remounted their Fringe Event hit production *One Beautiful Evening* for a limited run

The choreography was also lacking. Brydon Paige has choreographed so many better pieces that the *Nutcracker* was almost an embarrassment. There were exceptions to this, notably the *Danse Arabe* which was creative and interesting, but mostly the choreography struck me as being ordinary. At times, such as the *Grande Pas de Deux*, the exciting jumps and lifts didn't match the climactic moments of the music, which were usually accompanied by calm, ordinary steps.

The most critical flaw however, was that the entire performance did not sparkle. The dancers failed to establish that magical link with the audience that would

at Theatre Network Jan. 12-16 at 8pm, Matinees Saturday and Sunday at 2 pm.

The show began at Fringe Theatre during summerfest. A theatre company was formed by Robert Astle, Jan Henderson, Jan Miller and Frank C. Turner. Then, as Jan Miller says, "We decided on our own recognition we'd go out to Vancouver."

The play got good reviews in a run at Vancouver's Firehall in December: Vancouver Province critic Bob Allen called it an "innovative artistic vision" and NeWest Review called it "...a gem which manages to be simple and profound at the same time..."; but the show drew small houses despite the review.

"Of all the places we've played," says Jan Miller, "Theatre Network is the best space for the show— it's nice and intimate." The play is done in mask, but not mime. The actors "take on the character of the mask."

One Beautiful Evening is a "warm and humorous story about the people who frequent Canada's favorite cultural activity, the Bingo Night." It deals with a lonely widow and widower who are set to play bingo all the rest of their lives, when a "bingo wizard" comes in and affects their fate.

Robert Clinton will be doing a half-hour song presentation to get the audience in the mood for the relaxed, laid-back play.

have made it overlook all the flaws

In all fairness, it should be pointed out that there were some wonderful performances. The scores of children recruited for the ballet performed with a calm and professional attitude that is amazing, considering their ages. Svea Eklof, Marianne Beausejour, and Peter Bennett gave technically competent and even well-acted performances. Perhaps the most impressive performance came from Candy Wong, in the role of Clara. This little girl will go far if she chooses to stay in the performing arts. Her stage presence, while not yet overwhelming, is considerably well developed despite her youth.

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