

# A clown stops the world



THE WAGES OF SIN . . . is marriage

Climaxing a tour of small Alberta centres, Jubilaires begin their Edmonton run of *Stop the World, I Want to Get Off* in SUB Theatre October 17.

The musical, with book, music and lyrics by Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley, was an enormous success in its London and Broadway adaptations. Humor, pathos and everyman's desire to see the underdog beat the system, combine in one of the most inventive musicals ever staged.

The story chronicles the life history of a run-of-the-mill worker named Littlechap. Living a life of birds and beds (sometimes both), he nevertheless has ambitions: he wants to be rich. The first plum that falls into his lap (or into hers) is Evie, the boss's daughter, whom he accidentally knocks up.

Littlechap gradually progresses through the factory ranks, until he is given the task of streamlining the northern branch office at Sludgepool. On the way up, he meets and makes the athletic Anya, a girl who forces her attentions upon him on a business trip to Russia; Ilsa, the German maid; and Ginnie, the idiot singer in an American night club.

Anyone that active is bound to have some troubles come his way. Littlechap is harassed by his father-in-law, who thinks he is worthless, and is burdened by a wife whose remarkable fecundity seems only to produce girls. He manages to bring into his grasp almost all the challenges which colored his earlier dreams, eventually becoming a Member of Parliament.

Yet he knows too that he has never really made another person happy, nor succeeded in his greatest ambition, the fathering of a son. Only in old age can he stop the world and reflect upon the ultimate failure of his superficial successes, realizing the beauty and worth of Evie.

Whether Jubilaires can *Stop the World* or not remains to be seen. Their history has been spotted with beautifully executed musicals, such as *Once Upon a Mattress* and *The Fantasticks*. But more often than not, Jubilaires have insulted their audiences with careless staging, dreadful acting and singing, and idiotic plots. Last year's *Girl Crazy* was perhaps the worst thing ever presented on an Edmonton stage.

As Littlechap, Conrad Boyce will have to carry the show. He sings most of the songs, all of which require wide range and control (Gonna Build a Mountain, Once in a Life-

time, What Kind of Fool Am I), and he is onstage for a longer period than Hamlet or Quinten in Miller's *After the Fall*.

The biggest problem Boyce will have to overcome is Boyce. His nastiness and posturing as Bellomy in *The Fantasticks* was so perfect that Citadel asked him to repeat the role in their upcoming production, but his nastiness and posturing as Snake Eyes in *Girl Crazy* suggests that he may be limited to one stage personality. And Littlechap just cannot be played that way.

Kerry Hughes brings to her role as Evie an impressive background in the drama department, Jubilaires and the Shirlee Adams Dancers. She has the tough assignment of playing not only Littlechap's wife but also his three mistresses, and must sing with Russian, German and American accents.

And she has the unenviable task of not only trying to raise a pretty dull song (Typically English) above the level of banality, but singing three equally dull variations of it (Typische Deutsche, Glorious Russian, All American).

*Stop the World* is set in the world of the circus, the lead actors appearing in clown make-up and costumes (obviously a poor visual metaphor for the "circus of life"). The beautiful sets designed by Sean Kenny for the London and New York productions placed the action in centre ring of a huge circus, with banks of seats on which the actors move surrounding it on three sides. The back wall of this "tent" was used to project symbolic images, such as gigantic wheels and cogs when Littlechap is in the Sludgepool factory.

Jubilaires have come up with the intriguing idea of using eight dancers to simulate the factory machinery. This should considerably enlarge the scope of this musical, which has always seemed to me to be underpopulated (originally there was only Littlechap, Evie, and their two daughters). Under the direction of Orest Semchuk, who last year molded the Jubilaires dancers into an impressive ensemble, the dance routine could prove an interesting counterpoint to the stylized sets, make-up and acting of the musical.

Directed by Wes Stefan, *Stop the World* will appear in SUB Theatre October 17, 18, 23, 24 and 25. Tickets are on sale in SUB, Tory Building and Mike's News Stand.

—Ron Dutton

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