

# ENTERTAINMENT

## Yuks galore in student production

by Christina Starr

*Thieves' Carnival*, presented by Studio Theatre at Corbett Hall until December 10, is for those who want an entertaining evening of lively theatre that doesn't ask you to think too much.

The play is exactly like the title suggests - a carnival of elaborate and striking costumes, impressive set designs, and eccentric characters. It is the story of a very bored, very rich, past-her-prime high society lady who tries to stir up some excitement by inviting two conniving thieves and their apprentice to share her villa in Vichy, France, with herself, her aged friend Lord Edgard, and his two nieces: Juliette, who is a sweet, innocent, sugar and spice nubile young woman, and Eva, a not-so-innocent, black lace and stockings young widow.

The situation is ripe for comedy in all its forms - mistaken identity, disguises, tricks of plot, reversals of fortune, etc., as well as a glance at the superficiality and loneliness of high society. All-around good entertainment.

In fact the play would probably be perfect had Jean Anouilh (the playwright) let the story tell itself. Unfortunately, all that subtlety which we like to consider a characteristic of good art, is nonexistent in *Thieves Carnival*.

Too often the witty dialogue and very amusing plots and counter-plots are interrupted with serious contemplations of life, which aren't very provocative, and well-intentioned character study, which isn't very deep. It's like having to stop and read "Michaelangelo's Guide to Interpretation of the Last Supper" in the middle of enjoying the painting. It's not only unnecessary, it's irritating.

Apart from the unfortunate anxiety of the author the play stands out as a definite achievement of the U of A's fourth year BFA students in the field of entertainment. The characters are extravagant, and the script is

witty, and herein lies the value of the play and the benefit of viewing its performance.

Susan Henley and Todd Postlethwaite are especially wonderful in their portrayals of Lady Hurf, a wornout and very bored rich ex-vamp who nevertheless can still strut her stuff, and the eccentric, dimwitted, easily confused Lord Edgard, respectively. The U of A should be proud of nurturing such outstanding talent.

Alyson Bachinsky also deserves mention as the sexy young widow who cannot bring herself to want a man again, although she has no trouble attracting them. The contrast between her and the younger Juliette, played by Jackie Dandedneau, was too striking, however, and verged on the melodramatic.



People, students in fact, pretending to be someone they aren't.

photo by Angela Wheelock

Tony Eyamie and Chris St. Pierre effectively execute the high class version of "thieves" as a father-son duo in quest of a fat dowry, in contrast to Robert Wisden, Eric Kramer and Mark Bennet, who take no aversion to wearing women's clothing if it will help to grab a thick wallet, which they seem incapable of doing.

These talented people had the good fortune to work with the much experienc-

ed Bernard Hopkins as their director. His knowledge of the theatre is evident in creative presentation and smooth production.

Perhaps Jean Anouilh was not counting on such talent to perform *Thieves' Carnival*. Artists such as these, who can put together a production which I'm sure Jean Anouilh himself would find stunning, make the built-in interpretations and tedious explanations too obviously redundant.

## Christmas fares eyed

by K. Arthur

As the frustrations of Christmas shopping begin to take their toll, choosing from an incredible array of Christmas records could easily push on over the edge. Let me prevent any pre-Christmas anxiety and suggest some recording to help keep your Christmas spirits up.

The perennial holiday favorite, Handel's Messiah, has been blessed with many beautiful and memorable performances. My personal favorites include performances by Christopher Hegwood (L'Oiseau Lyre) and Charles Mackerras (Angel). The Hogwood recording employs a small orchestra using original instruments, and an Anglican cathedral choir,

the Choir of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford. Of all recorded Messiahs, this issue undoubtedly is the finest choral singing.

Mackerras' recording stresses a traditional approach as opposed to Hogwood's search for authenticity. The forces involved include the English Chamber Orchestra, the Ambrosian Singers, and soloists Elizabeth Horwood, Janet Baker, Paul Esswood, Robert Tear, and Haimung Herincx. This performance is rich and warm without becoming overinflated, and all of the soloists are excellent.

If you are looking for recordings of Christmas carols to inspire you, your choice seems limitless. Of the Christmas records offered by the Kings College Choir, Cambridge, the best on to start with is entitled "The World of Christmas" Vol. 1. It features the most popular carols sung in the inimitable Kings tradition.

Another excellent choral Christmas album is the Bach Choir Family Carols. The Bach choir is a mixed choir (men and women) and their style is much brighter through Kings. On this record they are accompanied by the Philip Jones Brass Ensemble. The recording is rich and clear.

Speaking of the Philip Jones Brass Ensemble, they have a Christmas record too, entitled "Noel". The arrangements for brass ensemble are delightful and the playing exemplary.

The Spirit of Christmas with Colin Davis conducting the London Symphony Orchestra and the John Alldis Choir (Philips) has lovely orchestral arrangements of Christmas favorites. Only a few of the carols are sung by the choir, so that this album can provide a break for a choral barrage.

Finally, my own favorite Christmas album, Christmas with the Kings' Singers (MMG). The King's Singers have a repertoire that extends from Renaissance madrigals to Randy Newman, and their arrangements will make you hear traditional music in a new and refreshing way. Their rendition of Mel Tormes Christmas Song rivals the Velvet Fog himself. A wonderful album to play on Christmas day.

'Til next holiday season, have a merry and musical Christmas.

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