

ARTS

Tale too tedious

How I Got That Story
By Amlin Gray
Citadel Rice Theatre until Oct. 29

Review By Wendy Hawkins

How I Got That Story by Amlin Gray could be a good satiric play full of black humour and make some provocative statements on war, Vietnam in particular. Unfortunately, the play isn't much good on either count.

The play is in episodic form and is the story of a Reporter (Robb Paterson) from the "western part of east Dubuque" who goes to report on guerrilla warfare in Amboland. He is confronted with various Historical Events (played by Lorne Kennedy) and as the play progresses we see how he is affected by the war.

In all fairness, it must be noted that Vietnam is one of the most difficult subjects to deal with — much has already been written and said about it. Gray doesn't write well about his subject, however. His brand of black humor is heavy-handed, tacky and tiresome, and the constant flow of hit-you-

over-the-head ironic messages becomes a nuisance. Patterson doesn't help matters with his unconvincing and monotonous portrayal of the wimpy reporter.

Lorne Kennedy, on the other hand, is wonderful in his role as Historical Event. He plays 21 different characters, including a sexy bar girl, a Communist, and the maddening dictator Madame Ng. His acting certainly provides some of the best entertainment in the play and saves it from being a total loss.

The set design, costumes and lighting are very good. The sound effects, compiled by Paul Hope consisted of someone attempting to imitate the sounds of helicopters, among other things, into a microphone; certainly almost anyone or anything else could have been more effective.

The production of the play isn't bad, considering what there is to work with. However, even a good performance of a rotten play can never be more than simply adequate. Don't waste your money — it'll be better spent on something else.



Historical Event and Reporter team up for black humour.

photo Angela Wheeler

Exhaustion shows through in lacklustre show

Men at Work
Stevie Ray Vaughan
Northlands Coliseum
October 15

review by Brenda Waddle

Question: Can you describe the three main components in the Melbourne Weight Loss Program?

Answer: 1. Decreased caloric intake; 2. moderation with alcohol; 3. an aerobics program choreographed by Men at Work's saxman Greg Ham.

Ham, who by the way is very well

named, was the brightest point in Saturday's presentation. His hyperactive dancing, corny audience patter ("I hear you've got a hockey team here. What's that they're called - the Oilies?") and professional work on keyboards, sax, flute and trumpet were a brave attempt to cover for the utter exhaustion present in the rest of the band, notably front man Colin Hay. It seems the boys from Down Under have come a long way with their Cargo and are looking forward to heading home. This tired lack of enthusiasm killed a couple of songs which could have easily been the high

points of the show. The words to "Overkill", the opening number and one of the band's most meaningful songs, were entirely lost. "Down Under", their biggest hit, was sung in such a monotone it was hard to distinguish one word from the next.

Luckily, Hay woke up midway through the show and things progressed smoothly from there. "Dr. Heckyll and Mr. Jive" was made memorable by a mad scientist routine by Greg Ham. "Who Can It Be Now", "It's A Mistake" and "Be Good Johnny" were all performed with a lot of verve and spirit. Some very promising new material was presented, including one poignant almost-ballad destined for top-forty success.

Technically, my only complaint was with the twin palm trees which flanked the stage and often hid guitarist Ron Stryker and bassist John Rees. The lighting, however, was excellent, particularly on "Helpless Automation", where it followed every beat and created a bizarre (sci-fi) effect.

The opening act, rhythm and blues guitarist Steve Ray Vaughan and his band Double Trouble, was strident and monotonous except for the die-hard blues fan. His current hit, the rockabilly "Pride and Joy", was met with lukewarm enthusiasm, but the mass exodus from the floor during his forty-five minute stint revealed how tepid it really was. I wonder at the logic of pairing a blues artist like Vaughn with a new wave-cum-reggae band like Men at Work. Last year's pairing of the "Men" with one of Australia's other up-and-coming bands, Mental as Anything, was far more suitable.

All told, however, it was a very slick and enjoyable performance. Hopefully the next time Men at Work saunter through town, Colin Hay will have developed a little more stage presence or at least will have had a good night's sleep. For one impressed by his sometimes enigmatic, sometimes crazy behavior in the videos, Hay was a large disappointment. It was not fair for Greg Ham to be the only one "at work."

Master Series...

Orchestra makes up for pianist

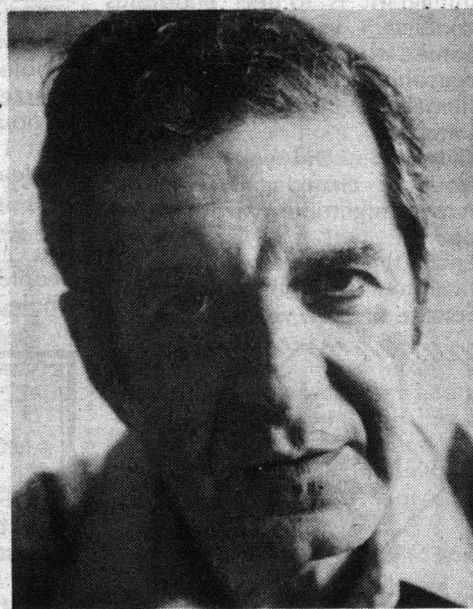
Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, Master Series
Jubilee Auditorium, Oct. 14/15

Review By Christine Koch

The Edmonton Symphony Orchestra's Master Series opened Friday with a concert of classical and romantic music. Under the baton of resident conductor Uri Mayer, the orchestra's accompaniment to Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 and their deliverance of Bruckner's Symphony No. 7 were transporting in emotive power.

With respect to Beethoven, Claude Frank, guest concert pianist of international acclaim, was a disappointment. His runs were not as crisp or clear as they might have been. And there was more than one missed, or wrong, note played. In the second movement Frank and the orchestra were out of sync at the end of several phrases. Though the execution was otherwise as technically virtuosic and masterly as one might expect of a pianist of this calibre, and he closely followed the expression as directed in the score, still Frank's rendering of this early Beethoven concerto seemed to lack the feeling and colour necessary to be truly affecting.

The symphonic accompaniment, on the other hand, was wonderful, outshining the soloist by far. Indeed, it seemed at times as if the piano were relegated to the role of continuo, complementing the orchestra, instead of vice versa. Mayer took care not to allow the volume of the symphony to overpower the keyboard, but considering quality and not just quantity of sound, the sensitive and harmonic handling of the orchestra — and particularly of the string sections — assumed precedence over the comparatively pedestrian piano passages.



Claude Frank

The highlight of the evening was Bruckner's seventh symphony. This is an ambitious work, suffused throughout with Wagnerian undertones. It is longer than usual (about 70 minutes), and requires extra instruments: the orchestra was augmented from 67 to 82 musicians for this piece. The texture and colour of instrumentation — from the initial delicate *tremolo* on the strings to the strident Wagner tubas (intermediary in tone between horn and tuba proper) — was exploited to its full range, and the resulting dynamism and powerful richness were soul-stirring. In this way the very lyrical melodies, especially the theme motif of the haunting and powerful second movement, were developed in a manner that was little short of sublime.

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