



photo Bill Light

Very few bright spots liven weak Citadel production.

Tidbits are royal flop

The Hollow Crown
The Rice Theatre

review by I. and J. Levental

Would you be excited to find out how James I blew a "Counterblast to Tobacco," or how Henry VII sent a "memorandum to his Ambassadors" concerning the Queen of Naples, to discover whether her breath was sweet or not? Or how about Horace Walpole's impressions of the funeral of George II? If your answer is yes, go and see *The Hollow Crown* by John Baron, currently playing at the Rice Theatre.

We, however, found it pretty boring. In fact, by the second act, things became so tedious that we were forced to read the program advertisements for amusement.

This "entertainment" (as it is referred to in the program) is a loosely arranged series of vignettes about the kings and queens of England, interspersed with music and poetry by the above. There is no particular central plot or unifying theme. Very much like a bunch of Monty Python sketches, except these 'upper class twits' aren't funny.

The Hollow Crown offers a glimpse of different historic and personal events in the lives of the various monarchs. After a while you lose track of who denounced whom, who was infatuated with whom, and, eventually, who cares?

The actors did care, though. Or at least, did a commendable job of pretending to care. They tried to capture all the nuances of the characters they portrayed,

and to inject some life into an otherwise "hollow" production.

Christopher Gaze exhibited a perfect sense of timing in every monologue he presented. He seemed to be totally at ease with every prop on stage, using them so effectively, and moving so naturally that his acting resembled a well-given improvisation. Graeme Campbell gave another glittering performance. He established an immediate rapport with the audience, commanding attention to his every word and gesture.

Merrilyn Gann was the only female in the play, and, as a result, had the "juiciest" parts: Ann Boleyn in the tower, Queen Victoria on her coronation, and Jane Austen at the age of fifteen. Her performance was engaging, as usual.

The other two actors, however, did not perform up to par with the rest of the cast. Except for a competent James I, Allan Lysell's portrayals were bastions of mediocrity. He kept on confusing and misusing intonations, which can hardly be forgiven. Lawrence Reese played the guitar and had a few speaking parts. He played the guitar very well.

Director Frances Hyland and her stage crew obviously put a lot of thought and effort into the production, which is all the more remarkable because one cannot easily imagine that the very capable people involved in this "entertainment" found it artistically challenging or even interesting.

Thus, *The Hollow Crown* is a waste of time and talent.



photo N.F. Goode

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