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The place: Rome. Specifically, a street fronting on the homes of three of Rome's leading (?) citizens. The time: a spring day, approximately 200 years before the advent of Christianity.

The story revolves around the cherubic form of the slave Pseudolus, who is masterfully played by Richard Ouzounian, making his Neptune debut in this production. Pseudolus attempts finagle his freedom from the service of his young master, Hero (Shawn Wright). In order to do so, Pseudolus must somehow obtain his master's true love,

Philia (Elizabeth Beeler), from the licentious flesh pedlar Lycus (Max MacDonald). True to the aura of the play, Pseudolus' con-artistry makes for all manner of confusion.

Some of the best scenes occurred with the House of Senex's head slave, Hysterium (Clary Croft). Aptly named, Hysterium was confronted with the task of keeping the house in order while Citizen Senex (Sudsy Clark) was away. Constantly vexed by Pseudolus, his nerves nearly shattered, order was not to be the order of the day for Hysterium. One memorable scene occurred when both Pseudolus and Hysterium were found face to face in a near state of mutual panic. Hands on each other's shoulders, audience roaring with laughter, the two faced off like Tim Conway and Harvey Korman in old Carol Burnett reruns. Showing professional control, the two actors just barely managed to hold back their own guffaws.

Throughout the production are no less than fourteen tunes, such as "The House of Marcus Lycus", sung by Max MacDonald; "Bring Me My Bride", with Miles Gloriosus (Frank MacKay), a somewhat self-absorbed Roman Captain and others; a touch of the comic operetta in "That Dirty Old Man" with Domina (Jeanette White); and "Funeral" with Miles, Pseudolus, and the mourners.

What's left? Well, so as not to give away too much of the story, I'll say 'nada'. If you really want to know, you'll have to go find out for yourself. If you're tired of the mundane and are craving a break, pop on down to Neptune. You won't regret it. Put away all your dark thoughts (like mid-terms, papers and such) and have a laugh, because, as the refrain goes, "tragedy tomorrow, comedy tonight!"

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, directed by Valerie Moore. Till February 7 at Neptune Theatre.

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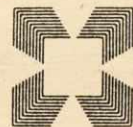
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Monday, Jan. 25, 8 pm. Dal SUB.

