

Talents and Tunes Tops In Imaginative 'Imbroglio'

It is rarely an unmitigated pleasure to write a review of a Brandeis production. The reviewer appreciates the hard work that has gone into the making of the show, and he would like to be kind, yet, unless he wishes to lower his standards, he must be harsh and realistic. "Imbroglio," however, is one of those rare occasions where the above considerations do not apply. In every way, from all angles, this was a real peach. So if this review reads like a catalog of virtues, it is not because the reviewer is entering a popularity contest, but because he sincerely feels that this was the best show of its kind hitherto seen at Brandeis.

For the first time in our experience, Hi Charlie was not a revue of uneven merit, but an integrated unified musical comedy. Haskell Barkin has written a lively and amusing book, and the lyrics of Henry Braun and John Haskell as well as Micah Naftalin's score were part of a whole rather than isolated "feature numbers." Bruce Mark's Ballet interlude was a meaningful part of the action. And Sidney Hurwitz' set allowed ample room for romping without appearing barren.

From the opening tableau to the hilarious finale this show moved. Haskell Barkin's expert direction eliminated any and all dead spots. The actors did not merely deliver their lines or songs, but used gesture and movement to enliven the proceedings. A lively pace was set and sustained; not even show-stopping applause caused any unnatural freezing of the action. Even a rather dead audience (at least on Friday night) failed to dampen the enthusiasm of the performers.

The acting was superb, top honors going to Annette Lieberman for her portrayal of a has-been movie queen and Mark Samuels for his interpretation of a love-struck

southern Senator. In less expert hands, these roles might have become crude caricatures; these two, however, took full advantage of the comic possibilities without overplaying. Little things like the fluttering of a kerchief well used to punctuate the personality. Her singing voice, a startling combination of Ethel Merman and Marlene Dietrich, really sold the musical numbers. Mark Samuels has shown his merit as a dramatic actor in many Brandeis performances; in "Imbroglio" he revealed a new side of his talent. His alternately moonstruck and blustering Senator Crux danced nimbly across the stage, snapping his suspenders and pulling his beard, obviously enjoying his part and communicating this enjoyment to his audience irresistibly.

Gigi Chazin stopped the show with her rendition of "I Had a Reputation." No doubt about it: Whatever it is, Gigi has it. There was nothing contrived about her performance, combining charm and grace with a not inconsiderable amount of natural talent. Hi Charlie's talent scouts have consistently discovered new talent in the past few years. They have not lost their touch.

David Cort, complete with cigarette holder, beret and Russian accent, made his debut as a "singer" with conspicuous success, and contributed ably to the general hilarity.

Henry Grossman did ably in the role of male romantic interest. His was not a meaty part, but he turned in the capable performance we have come to expect from him. David Graubard was a happy doctor, a little sly for his age but amusing, and Saga Vuori was a captivating Maid, looking for all the world like a Petty cover in the New

The Ballet interlude, following a clever take-off on psychological Yorker

melodrama, was effective and added a macabre note to the show. The dancing of Bruce Marks and Sheila Handelman were standouts here. We are looking forward to

Dick Tracy...

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"I don't remember who found the gun," Marsha Pares said. "Peter Shlesinger, that boy over there, insisted it was his."

"Michael found it," Ethel said angrily.

"But he didn't know what it was," Marsha retreated slightly.

"I did too," Michael insisted.

"I had to tell you," Peter said with great scorn.

"We have to give it back, anyway," Ethel said sternly to Peter.

Marsha Pares admitted that maybe her son did find it.

The inspector wrote down her name, and Ethel Shlesinger's too, as witness. Then he asked for addresses and where the gun had been found. Finally he directed them to a train that was being switched to the downtown track.

"And don't worry," he called. "If no one claims it within thirty days, you'll have it back."

Peter said, "Glurp."

— Risa Lavine

seeing more of the new talent that has been added to the Modern Dance group. Micah Naftalin's music underlined the lyrics and personalities of the cast excellently. His score was tasteful and melodic as always, and demonstrated real humor, as in the Senator's old-fashioned "Serenade", the battle-hymn quality of Henry's "Man Doesn't Stand a Chance" and in Reva's brassy "Reputation." His violent ballet score for piano and tympani was very effective.

The fact that none of the actors were "singers" in the conventional sense was a help rather than an impediment to this kind of a show — every musical number was delivered without loss of lyrics and without the unnecessary histrionics often displayed by real singers. The four-piece band discharged its duties well, trumpeter Dan Friedman carrying the lion's share.

One of the gratifying things about "Imbroglio" was the stage-presentation displayed by the cast. They conducted themselves like seasoned performers. Many of them are, of course, but we suspect that much of the credit for the professional character of the performance is due Haskell Barkin's direction.

What has been said here at great length can be summed up in one sentence: "Imbroglio" was a thoroughly enjoyable, original, and competent job. The future makers of Hi Charlie have a challenging standard to live up to.

— Dan Morgenstern

Africa...

A famous journalist once said that average man experiences greater grief from the death of his dog, then he does from reading about 10,000 Indians or Chinese dying from famine or plague. I rather think the same thing applies to Africa: bare statistics tell the horrible story — disease, poverty, ignorance, slavery — but are statistics enough? Do you really conceive of the Africans as being people who can think — and feel — and want — and suffer just as you?

I have dispensed, partly due to the limitations of space, with the bare and grim figures which reveal the lack of anything even remotely approaching adequate medical facilities, schools, or homes for the African, and have chosen to use instead Henry Simon's graphic description of life on a South African reserve. "People stagnate in poverty, illiteracy, and ill-health. The great majority of people live in primitive huts built of wattle clay, windowless, and with no outlet for smoke, and infested with vermin and rodents. Earthen floors are the rule; beds, tables, chairs, and other articles of furniture are found only in the minority of huts — sanitary facilities are seldom found — supplies of pure or polluted water are inadequate for domestic purposes — typhus, leprosy, tuberculosis, malaria, bilharzia, and syphilis are widespread — all the diseases on the reserves are associated with overcrowding, inadequate sanitation facilities, un pure water supply, malnutrition and general poverty — all the diseases are preventable."

The reserves of South Africa are in reality pig-sties from which the native can be driven when the Europeans feel the need of cheap labor. If sheer physical deprivation does not force the African to leave his family and seek work in the mines or on the plantations, the various taxes which he must pay under threat of imprisonment — which means enslavement — do.

An African can go to work on a plantation quite easily if workers are needed, but leaving is another story. There, as in Kenya, the verbal contract exists, which means in practice there is no contract. Disputes do not often arise, however, because the African is in the most literal sense doing slave labor. He cannot leave the plantation without the white owner's consent; and should the owner refuse he would have to stay on indefinitely — working definitely long hours for definitely small pay.

If the African should go into the city — Johannesburg, for instance — he would find himself restricted to the most menial and filthy jobs, and his living quarters restricted to Sophiatown. Sophiatown has to be seen to be believed. It is the world's largest slum — a modern ghetto. Most of the blacks in Sophiatown live in **Pondokies**, which are shacks

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made of kerosene tins, odd bits of boarding and an occasional piece of corrugated iron. Disease is rampant in Sophiatown; most of the babies born there die in infancy; and those that survive suffer there in time come to wish that they too had died before ever living.

Every African in Sophiatown is forced to carry 11 passes. He must have one to show that he has paid his taxes, one showing he has work, one to travel, one to be put on the street after nine o'clock, etc., etc., etc.

In return for the land that was stolen from him the backbreaking labor he is forced to do, what does the African get that he might put on the plus side of the ledger? There is one area involving finance and the payment of the Africans individually and as a group exceeds those of the whites. I believe it is the only area where the European has let the native stay out in front. That area involves the payment of taxes.

In return for his barren plot on the reserve his slave labor on the plantation, each one of his 11 passes, the education he did not get and the disease he did get, the African pays more taxes than the white man. This, however, is only logical and consistent: he receives unequal treatment in everything else — why not here? In a sense he is even receiving preferential treatment. Neglected in all else, forced to stand at the back of the line on all other occasions, on one occasion — tax day — he is not only allowed to stand at the head of the line, but encouraged to make the largest contribution.

The Union of South Africa is part of the free world, mind you — it calls itself a democratic republic. Democracy means "rule by the people" — all of them, not some of them.

When M. Staydon, the probable successor to the Reverend Doctor Daniel Maldan, was asked why the blacks are almost entirely excluded from voting, he said that they were not quite ready for it yet. When reminded that the qualifications for voting were much higher for blacks than they were for whites, Staydon answered that for native and European, and if they had equal qualifications they had proportional representation, the black man would swamp the white. Thus his last sentence contradicted his first and exposed the situation as it exists today in the Union of South Africa and in all of Africa. The horror, the wanton terror, the conscienceless rape of a continent and brutalization of a people, goes on from day to day and hardly a voice is heard in this land of ours crying out against the colonial powers. Hardly a man stands up to be counted among those calling for justice.

— John Howard

(This article will be concluded next week.)

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