

By BRYAN MUNSON
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Something mysterious happened when I attended Baylor Theater's second production of the season. Unlike most theaters today, the production area had no limits. The back-to-back one acts strive to show that we are all, in some way, part of the show, and the result is quite infectious.

The three-hour production was very well received by the standing room only crowd Tuesday night. It began unobtrusively when three people from the Theater's company stood in the audience and sang a Noel Coward song about raising the stage curtain. Then they proceeded to the stage, joined by the rest of the company, and presented a choreographed tribute to life in the theater.

Then, the company presented its first offering of the evening, Terrence Rattigan's *A Harlequinade*. This one-act play gave the audience a view of theater behind the scenes, and, in order to emphasize it more, they denied that an audience was even present.

The entire production was ingeniously staged as if Hooper-Scheffler's Theater B was empty and the cast was merely rehearsing. Characters spoke and made entrances from the audience, voices came from off-stage and from the light box and the lighting would be altered at the request of anyone on the stage.

But, far from the rehearsal it appeared to be, the production was well timed, witty and very entertaining.

The play concerns the rehearsal of *Romeo and Juliet*, portrayed by two aging thespians, Arthur and Edna (played by Randall Wilson and Deborah Nobles), and the legal conflict of some of Arthur's past actions outside the theater.

All of the characters working with the production of *Romeo and Juliet* seem to be equally oblivious to the outside world as the leads are portrayed as hilarious caricatures of actors who find reality only in staged fantasies. Besides, as Christopher Coleman's character asserts during *A Harlequinade*, "What does life have to do with the theater?"

The magic of the production is that it doesn't make the audience feel sorry for the naivete of the characters as much as it makes you wish it were as easy for you to find balcony scene rehearsals more important than legal hassles.

More than anything, *A Harlequinade* is a theatrical delight quite professionally handled.

Now, it seems, Baylor Theater has us in its spell, and as the second offering, Tom Stoppard's *The Real Inspector Hound*, begins we are asked to see what it is like to be part of the audience.

The play concerns two critics who are reviewing a play which, the audience, can also see. As it progresses, we watch as the two critics become involved in the play to the point of climbing on the stage and playing parts in it.

Stephen Petty and Paul Thompson play the two critics, Birdboot and Moon, with thoughtful intensity. Moon's boyish ambition is mirrored well by Birdboot's established fame.

It is the little things that make *The Real Inspector Hound* work though; like the concentrated twitch of Birdboot as he watches the production, the obvious dead body on stage that is continually being run over by the couch and the fast-paced dialogue that is well worth catching.

Aside from being a light comedy, *The Real Inspector Hound* is really a very inventive, plot-twisting drama.

The element that made the evening work was that the actors were enjoying themselves so much you could not help but join in the revelry too.

With the plays now complete, the company reassembled on stage and had the audience join them in singing "Saturday Night at the Rose and Crown" to bring full circle the point that the stage and the audience are truly one.

Something mysterious did happen when I attended Baylor Theater's second production of the season—the theater burst its constraints and truly came alive.