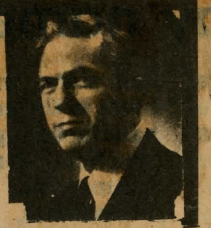


Theatrically Speaking

TCC production fantastic

By Doyle R. Smith



"The Fantasticks" is a shimmering bit of theatricality wrapped around a romantic idyllic dream—the purity of young love—and how it's battered by the real world into something both stronger and finer-compassion and love. We knew the authors, Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt, as eager and idealistic fellow students at the University of Texas in Austin around 1950. Their inspiration was Edmond Rostand's little romantic farce, "The Romancers." And what an improvement they wrought. Thousands of performances by hundreds of companies attest to the durability of "The Fantasticks."

One of the most charming productions we've seen (and that counts a lot of them) was the just completed TCC version. Gene Nelson directed, Chuck Kline designed and built the beautifully functional set, Jan Collum outdid herself in non-classic choreography and Margaret Lobbergt presided at the piano. Phil Hanson and Dave Whisner assisted for percussion and bass—all musicians were up-stage behind a scrim—a perfect location for the orchestra in a musical.

A very well-balanced cast captured the romantic spirit, theatrically human frailty, and compassion inherent in the script and music. Hector Cruz was a dashing El Gallo—not strong vocally, but with a smooth and distinctive quality. Laurie Nelson (The Girl) has an exceptionally full and lovely voice for her young years. She's also a striking looking girl with composure, grace and a special charisma in performance. Jorge Nelson (The Boy) is a fine actor and handsome lad. I suspect the score was transposed down a bit, because some parts seemed low for him to get full vocal strength—for I know he has a strong baritone.

Alan Steinkirchner (Girl's Father) and B. Shawn Jarman (Boy's Father) were hilariously effective in their vaudevillian clown roles. Rick Valenta (Old Actor) and Bert McKinney (Man Who Dies) created gems of farcical "old actor" characters—while Blaine Landon's Mute was quite eloquent.

We sincerely hope this first collaboration from the music and drama areas at TCC will continue into the indefinable future. Music Theatre requires special talents and energies—and offers special rewards. This "Fantastics" was fantastic—proof of a winning combo.

Destruction is so easy

It's unfortunate that there are always some negative personalities about, looking for evil—or insults—or slurs. Such people always seem surprised and indignant to find what they've been looking for—even if it's only in their own mind (which it often is). It's fairly aximatic, especially in human relationships depending upon at best imperfect communication, to find exactly what we seek.

Because the "Man Who Dies" has generally been costumed as an Indian, some apparently misguided or possibly self-seeking persons, took it upon themselves to protest, picket, create animosity and difficulties, demand a change in the character—reportedly because the original "depicts our ancestors as savages." First off, pray tell, whose ancestors were NOT savages? But that's rather irrelevant. The character in question is an actor speaking Standard Stage Diction or Southern British dialect—with but a single marked talent—he dies interestingly and entertainingly. His sole goal in life is a highly laudable one—to entertain, to make people laugh, to relieve their worries for a bit of time. In short, he's a beautiful caring human,

contributing his small talent for the benefit of his neighbors. I call that a noble man. I guess the protestors don't see their people cast in such a magnanimous role. It's a pity. A sense of humor—a breadth of vision—a compassionate heart—a forgiving nature—a positive attitude—could do wonders in alleviating most, if not all, of humanity's ills.

Destruction is so easy and creation is so hard—and too many take the easy path. Nonsensical protestations detract from and destroy credibility over more legitimate concerns. I had an automatic pilot in the WW II vintage B-24 I flew. It was a marvelous instrument—relieving fatigue and tension on long flights. But, if the control sensitivity was tuned too high, it created an enormous chatter—annoying, wasteful and meaningless. Over-correction caused by over-sensitivity did no good.

'Veocities'