Sins And Needles: A Composite Of Many Contrasts

by David G. Johnson

Tech Show 1963 is a composite of contrasts. In 'Sins and Needles' the excellent contrasts with mediocre. This show has a higher-entertainment level than Tech Shows of recent years, but it also has contrasting high and low spots. Several aspects of the show compare favorably with professional materials, but other facets are singularly uninspired.

Wendy Wolfe, in her third year as leading lady, certainly carries the show. Her characterization is strong, but her weakness is weak. Her singing is excellent, but her speaking lines are few. The success of 'Sins and Needles' depends entirely upon Miss Wolfe, and she accepts the duty with finesse.

Wendy plays the only role which is always audible. She excels her movements and songs with surety. Although it is a joy to watch Miss Wolfe, the second act depends upon her so much that she tends to cry her song. But she is superb.

Without Wendy Wolfe or someone like her, the show would flop around and eventually die, as a chicken without its head.

The most obvious contrast is the strengths of the leading players as opposed to the chorus. The chorus is usually worse but always weak.

Stage presence with the inexcusability of the chorus is the confidence and poise of Ronald Bechtel, the leading man. This confidence and poise often seem stifled and exaggerated. Nevertheless Ronald has developed many mannerisms for his character. He smoothly projects several very different lines. On the other hand, a role of someone from the warier realm goes to Wendy. 'Love Is A Disease,' two of the opening songs of the show, while Ron Bechtol was on stage, 'Sins and Needles' took on a realism that was usually missing.

A contrast to Mr. Bechtol's easy mannerism is that of Howard Ellis, who plays the role of head surgeon of the hospital setting for the musical. Mr. Ellis's movements often seem stiff and exaggerated. Nevertheless Howard developed many mannerisms for his character. He smoothly projects several very different lines.

The low point of the whole show is the scene in the operating room. This scene is fraught with the demands of the audience. Performers as opposed to the chorus. The set would allow a smaller and more effective set. Elimination of a superfluous dance entry of the show would allow such a smaller set to be adequate.

The most pronounced contrast of the show is the difference between this opening scene and a later dance fantasy. This fantasy is beautiful. Few professional shows can boast an illusion of such magnitude. This is the only scene in the show for a dance ensemble, but this number is well worth the demands made of the rest of the show. The choreography, lighting, music, and symphonies are recognized as outstanding attractions.

This scene deserves the highest praise. It should be seen.

This year's score is a contrast to the scores of recent years. The score of 'Sins and Needles' does not seem to have the support, moral or otherwise. The score fits nicely, reinforcing the lyrics, catchy tunes, and musical sound effects. The balance between orchestra and singers is somewhat overly orchestral, but there is a spot or two where the chorus disappears altogether for an instant.

This year's Tech Show has once again tried to do a Broadway type show without the necessary time, facilities, and depth of talent. Kremlin is a fine urban business.

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