Review

**Fantasticks: simply entertaining**

By Mike McNamee

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Throughout its 16 years in New York, it's been an excellent way to spend a light evening laughing at someone else's woes without having your nose rubbed in your own. The MIT production of The Fantasticks, presented by the Musical Theatre Guild in Kresge Little Theatre last weekend and this coming weekend, preserves the character and charm of the original - and adds some. The cast is strong - although in some places their voices were not - the staging is imaginative, and the production's innovations are striking.

The most outstanding innovation has been the change in the character of The Mute, played here by Ruth Perrenod, a 1973 Simmons College graduate. Although The Mute ordinarily is used as something of a prop - handing out physical props, holding up a stick to represent the all-important Wall, and so forth - Perrenod is allowed to make full use of her considerable talents in dance and mime to interact throughout the performance. Thus, instead of holding up the Wall, she is the Wall, reflecting the emotions and shifts of character which go on between the major characters. It's an exciting change, and Perrenod makes an exciting part of it.

Robert Gaston plays the dual role of The Narrator and El Gallo with the proper swashbuckling verve, and is undoubtedly the strongest voice in the cast. Kathleen Lang Nuber and Arnold Toback are excellent as The Girl and The Boy around whom the story revolves, and Toback's opening monologue, in which he proclaims his knowledge and worldly wisdom - "I studied Biology!" - is one of the funniest parts of the show, especially before an MIT audience.

Robert Sutton '73 and Robert Greene G play the scheming fathers of the lovestruck couple with a great deal of vigor and comic energy. One of the very few weak spots of the play, however, is their voices, which tended to die out and be buried by the "orchestra" - a piano and a harp - just when they should have been strongest. Dan McGillicuddy and Chris Anderson, as the itinerant actors who stage the "rape," round out the cast with a madcap comic style.

The whole production is very professionally put together, from the music to the excellent set design to the choreography. The Musical Theatre Guild has brought to MIT and excellent vehicle for losing your cares and woes for an evening - in short, The Fantasticks.

Directed by Andrea Gordon
Kresge Little Theatre, 8pm, Sept. 11, 12, 13
3pm, Sept. 13
Admission $2.00

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