

Celebration: qualified success

By Sandy Yulke

Celebration is billed as a ritual musical, and perhaps it's because I don't like rituals that I found it to be nothing to celebrate. Though in some ways it's the best production that I've seen in Kresge, it just didn't keep me interested the way some of its less polished, but more interesting, predecessors have.

It seems to me that there are two classes of productions that the Musical Theatre Guild (MTG) can undertake; those which are famous, tried and true hits, which even if not particularly well produced, and beyond the scope of the group, will deliver to the audience songs that they are familiar with and like to hear; and smaller, lesser known shows, more within MTG's scope, but since they are lesser known, require a more polished performance to hold their audience.

Celebration falls into the second of these two classes; it's so little known that its great claim to fame is that it was written by the same people who brought you *The Fantasticks*. However, *The Fantasticks* holds the record for the longest

running musical, *Celebration* does not. There are many good reasons for this. *Celebration* is basically plotless, that is, it has a plot, but the plot is so hackneyed that it might as well not exist for all the suspense that it creates. But even the most lackluster plot can be overcome by exciting music and lyrics; too bad that's not the case here.

Though the Revelers who make up the chorus have some very clever choreography, which they execute with a great deal of vim and vigor, they simply can't make up for the weakness of the leads. John Marcou (Alexander Potemkin) is really excellent as long as he doesn't sing. He brings the role of the fast-buck con artist off really well, but when he sings, he simply can't be heard most of the time. I believe that he suffers partly from the terrible acoustics of Kresge, but there are other people in the production who come through much clearer than he does.

Foremost among these was Kathee Morris (Angel). She came through loud and clear, and was the most professional of the members of the cast. Tom Gilligan also acquitted himself very well, as Mr. Rich, the old

man. But his singing was also weak, and I assume that was because he was not using his natural voice, which I've heard before, and is genuinely full and pleasant. Ron Lyons (Orphan) was fervent enough as the protagonist, but half of what he had to sing I simply couldn't hear.

Saving the best for last, the set, costumes and music were the most together that I've seen from MTG. The set was both imposing and functional, and it was the first time that I've seen a set in Kresge that didn't look like it wandered in looking for a real proscenium stage. John Q. Peers, Jr. is to be congratulated. The lighting was also adequate, considering how limited it was.

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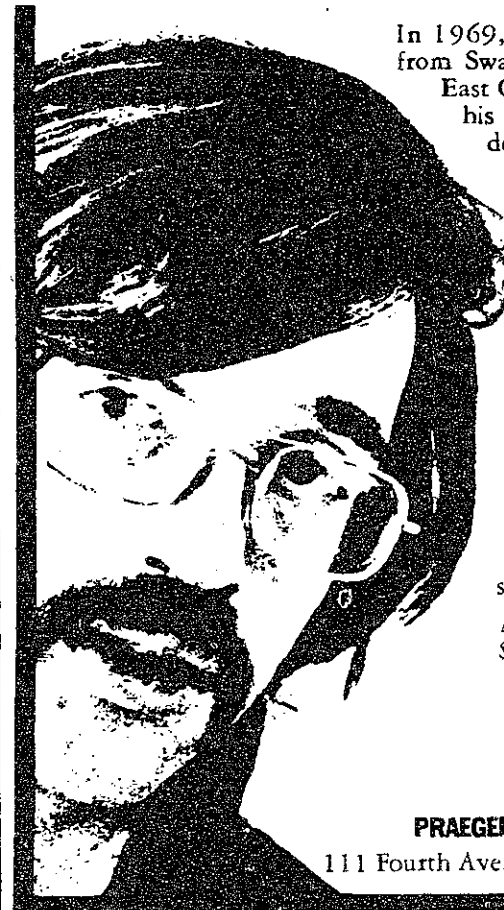
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