

## MTG's *Anything Goes* is the tops

When all looked black for the Musical Theatre Guild (which had been rendered homeless by the Kresge disaster), they were offered the use of Harvard's Loeb Drama Center, one of the finest theaters in the area. The idea of playing the Loeb galvanized the Guild into an unheard-of spate of activity. Rumors began circulating that led one to believe that the upcoming production would be superb. The production, *Anything Goes*, opened last Thursday, and lived up to all expectations. MTG has managed to present its best show since its 1977 production of *Brigadoon*.

*Anything Goes* serves as a vehicle for the songs of Cole Porter. With a minimal plot to provide continuity, the show becomes a



Moonface Martin (Steve Rosoff, right) tries to extricate himself from a conversation with Bishop Henry T. Dobson (Erik Bryan Sherman). (Photo by Scott Tobias, courtesy *Technique*)

real 1930's extravaganza. The plot is fairly simple: Billy Crocker finds himself aboard the "S.S." American bound for London. Also on board are his old friend Reno Sweeney and his old sweetheart Hope Harcourt. Hope is to be married to Sir Evelyn Oakleigh, but finds herself falling in love with Billy. At the same time, Reno falls for Sir Evelyn. After a lot of shenanigans (including a run-in with public enemy Moonface Martin, disguised as a priest), all turns out for the best in the standard happy ending.

The show's success depends on the execution of the singing and dancing, particularly in the large production numbers "Anything Goes" and "Blow, Gabriel, Blow." Choreography is usually MTG's weakness, but they managed to shine in most of the numbers. Barbara Kennedy is to be commended for her choreography of the "Anything Goes" sequence — she set a standard of excellence that the Guild found hard-pressed to repeat in subsequent tunes, especially "Heaven Hop" and "Take Me Back to Manhattan." The dancing here was rather poor; you could see the dancers counting their steps with fierce concentration as they tried to stay in step with each other. The ensemble singing was the best the Guild has produced — the harmonies were tight and precise, best exemplified in "Public Enemy Number one."

MTG has always had trouble locating talent within MIT which has caused them to look elsewhere for most of their leading players. "Anything Goes" was no exception to this rule, with only two of the six leads played by students. In this case the policy may be excused because the talent presented is of such high quality.

Barbara Kennedy is phenomenal as Reno Sweeney. She has a powerful, clear voice and a magnetic stage presence that is reminiscent of Ethel Merman's performance in the same role. She plays well off everyone, and excels in her rendition of "I Get a Kick Out of You." The role of Billy Crocker is expertly executed by Jerry Bisantz, the first MTG male lead I have seen



The leading players in *Anything Goes* (left to right): Sir Evelyn Oakleigh (William Glickman '83), Reno Sweeney (Barbara Kennedy), Hope Harcourt (Janet Grzywacz '81), and Billy Crocker (Jerry Bisantz). (Photo by Scott Tobias & Tom Russ courtesy MIT *Technique*)

who can sing and dance with equal facility. His singing of "All Through the Night" is a little shaky, but the melody of the tune is just at the edge of his range.

The role of Hope Harcourt is the weakest lead in the show; therefore, it requires a determined performance to make the part work. Janet Grzywacz '81 fails dismally in her attempt to bring life to her part, delivering most of her lines in a stifled manner. Her weak voice and limited dancing ability help make her presentation absolutely hopeless. Hope's fiancée, Sir Evelyn, is well played by William Glickman '83. His portrayal of the English gentleman is perfect — he successfully brings out the humor in his part while maintaining the dignity of his character.

The true scene stealer is Steve Rosoff as Moonface Martin. He has been given all the funny lines, and manages to deliver each with maximum effectiveness. His

facial expressions and exaggerated movements heighten his performance, and his rendering of "Be Like the Bluebird" stops the show.

The technical aspects of the show are just as good as the acting. John Peers provided a set design that was functional as well as elegant, and well-suited to the configuration of the Loeb stage. The placing of the band behind a screen at the top of the set was a clever touch. The lighting cues were slow at times, but they have probably been worked out. The Guild has managed to adapt well to a new stage.

Through sheer determination the Musical Theatre Guild has produced a better than average show that is well worth seeing. With any luck, they will be able to maintain their determination and establish a tradition of excellent shows.

— David Shaw

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