Dramashop needs work

Chamber Music, by Arthur Kopit, and Sam Shepard's Action. Directed by David Waggett '81, will be presented by Dramashop Friday and Saturday Evening at 8pm in Kresge Little Theatre. Admission is free.

"I have no reference for this" is probably the most appropriate line of the evening, spoken, oddly enough, by perhaps the best actor of the performance, Andy Lawrence. Although the material presented was interesting, the Dramashop players just couldn't seem to pull off a compelling performance.

As the curtain opens on Chamber Music, the audience is encouraged by the sight of nine, varied costumes, designed and produced by Rowland Kirby and Janet Rosenblatt. Hope is soon chiseled away as one of the actresses opens with a perfectly atrocious Germanic accent that gives way to Yiddish tonality later in the play. Why the accent? The woman playing records and swaying before us believes she is Johann Sebastian Bach. Upon the entry of several other characters from history (Joan d'Arc, Amelia Earhart, and Susan B. Anthony among them), it is evident that it is not a period piece we are viewing; rather, an unusual meeting of patients in an insane asylum. The remainder of the play revolves about their discussions, squabbles, and plans, which ultimately lead to the murder of one of their number as a symbolic threat to the men's wing of the asylum.

Enthusiasm among the actors is sometimes shown, but often in the form of confused squabbling, the volume of which lessens the impact (indeed, the understandability) of any interplay the characters might have. When there is laughter, it is contrived, being neither the nervous laughter of one hiding another reaction, nor the mad, un Silent laughter of one insane. The actors often try hard to pull off a good production, but there is no direction in which characterization or play events can move. Mary Buchanan, who gives a fair performance as the mad, unsettling laughter of one hiding another reaction, apparently, neither the actors nor, more importantly, the director, understands the play or its meaning (under whatever interpretation), and thus know not where to proceed. Much of the talent is there, but it is in much need of direction.

The evening's second offering, Sam Shepard's Action, brings to the audience a slightly more abstract (if no more sane) view of dealing with the world. This production, too, suffered from the directional deficiencies of Chamber Music, but differed in handling by the actors. Lawrence turned in a stirring performance as Jeep, a man bitterly trying to come to terms with a new reality imposed on him by some unspoken disaster. It seems that (Please turn to page 9)

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