Dramashop trio exhibits student talent

The MIT Dramashop performed Line by Steven Thornton '81, After Magritte by Tom Stoppard, and The Police by Slawomir Mrozek on Nov. 20, 21, and 22 in Kresge Little Theatre.

Dramashop's frequent performances of student-directed one-act plays are an excellent opportunity for MIT drama students to show off their writing, acting and directing talents, giving them the material to work with. Last weekend's offering proved to be no exception; the pieces presented were generally entertaining, although the choice of plays was, in one case, rather puzzling. Two of the three pieces were well-played and well-paced, but the third failed somewhat in that it seemed ill-suited to the available talent.

The first presentation was an original piece, Line by Steven Thornton '81. Thornton's play impresses, being a dialogue between two gun-cracking girls (Bonnee Greashall) and a guy in a leather jacket (Lew Bender '81) who is apparently trying to pick her up while she waits in line for admission into some sort of exclusive club. There is a fascinating ambiguity in the characterization of the intimidating tough girl, Joe; the audience is never quite sure whether her motives are good or evil. Bender did a fine job of bringing out the subtleties of the role, creating a thoroughly credible character. Greashall balanced the scene with an equally good portrayal of a confused young girl trying to decide whether to follow Joe or her better judgement, all the while babbling in a fluent flat Beconsian white.

After Magritte was a more humorous piece of absurdity. It centers on a young couple with a live-in mother-in-law (they never quite figure out whose mother-in-law she is) whose strange behavior (stacking furniture against the door, sleeping on ironing boards—you know, the usual) leads a local policeman to believe they may have taken part in a crime. The details of the plot are much too confusing to try to explain, but Kevin Cunningham '82 was properly upset at the wrongly-accused Harris, and Mary Finn '81 did an admirable job laboriously puffing out "Glowworms" on the tube. Special mention should go to Owen Doyle '83 as Officer Holmes, whose puzzled search for a warrant leads him to drag everything but the kitchen sink out onto the stage. The liveliest performances were turned in by Albert Ruesga '81 as the determined Inspector Foot, and Edythe Frampton '80 as the Statue of Liberty. Together, they provided the energy needed to keep the pace up and the audience in stitches.

Unfortunately, Mrozek's The Police did not meet the standards set by the first two plays. It is difficult to understand why an amateur drama group would choose to perform a play whose dialogue is so non-sequential and action is virtually nonexistent. The second one-act play is a much better effort, although its dramatic structure is similarly puzzling. The action is built upon an assumption that the audience is familiar with the plot of the play, but that is simply not so. The actors did an admirable job of trying to keep the action going, but did not succeed. The acting was weak and the resulting performance rather dull. However, David Waggett '81 should be commended for his convincing portrayal of a swaggering general; Waggett was able to overcome the handicap set by the script to a greater extent than the other, perhaps less experienced, actors.

Linda Schaffer

The MIT Community Players' production of After Magritte in the Little Theatre will play Dec. 3 at 7:30pm, Dec. 6 at 9pm & 7:30pm and Dec. 7 at 1pm in Kresge Little Theatre. Tickets are $3, $2.50 with MIT ID, $1.50 for children. For information & reservations, (617) 253-2877.

Performances are Nov. 25 and Dec. 1&2. Tickets are $3. Call 354-2915 for more information.

The MIT Dance Workshop will present an evening of student Works in Progress, directed by Beth Soll, on Fri., Dec. 12, at 7pm and on Sat., Dec. 13, at 3pm in Kresge Little Theatre. Admission is free. For information, call 253-2877.

The Cecilia Society appropriately opened its 1980-81 season on November 22, St. Cecilia's Day, with Handel's ode on St. Cecilia's Day. The two soloists, Nancy Armstrong and Peter Keen, were able to distinguish themselves — the former sounding strangely harsh and unusual, the latter simply weak. The chorus, however, was clear-voiced and well-coordinated, and the orchestra, under Donald Testers, was quintessentially Handelian, if somewhat lacking in tactility. My favorite verse concerns the soft complaining flute and the warbling lute. Both flute and lute were beautifully played in illustration by Eloise Preble and Robert Paul Sullivan respectively. The playing of Joan Eisch, celio, elsewhere, was exceptional.

The other work on the program was Helga's opera, Satir, taken from a story in the Mahabharata. Joan Sturas gave a stunning performance as Saviti, the woman who, through sheer wit, wins her husband back from Death. Her voice held a commanding power, giving weight to her sarcastic and humorous portrayal of a scheming general. Waggett was able to overcome the handicap set by the script to a greater extent than the other, perhaps less experienced, actors.

Jonathan Richardson

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