

Fiddler under the Dome

ARTS

Fiddler on the Roof, presented by the MIT Musical Theater Guild.

Fiddler on the Roof, this year's Musical Theatre Guild fall production, is weaker than past fall MTG productions, but is still worth seeing. It is characterized by generally good acting, but the technical side of the performance is not handled with MTG's usual finesse.

A fiddler on the roof may indeed be an unusual sight in most parts of the world, but not in Anatevka, a small Jewish community whose long-standing traditions are being broken down by the social changes sweeping pre-revolutionary Russia. The story is that of Tevye, the milkman, and his five daughters. The traditional background of the family breaks down more and more as the three oldest daughters take husbands. The first refuses her father's choice of husband and asks to marry another. The second asks only for his blessing, and the third leaves behind both family and faith to marry an outsider.

Joedy Leister, playing the role of Tevye, starts off slowly, then improves as the play progresses. At first he appears as a fairly weak character, with an unconvincing accent. In the early scenes, Leister seems a bit unsure of himself and the part is carried through mainly by the humor in the lines. Not until the second act do Tevye's emotions project enough to make him the powerfully moving character the role was meant to portray. His character finally fills out in the scene where he sings "Do You Love Me" with his wife, and for the first time is able to project his emotions at a level which hits more powerfully than his dry, witty comments on life. This change in character had a large effect on the continuity of the production. Breaking it into two parts, the first act brought out the comical portions, and the second act revealed the tragic nature of the plot. This



Photo by Gerard Weatherby

play should indeed get more serious as it progresses, but the change should be more gradual, rather than chiefly occurring over the intermission.

Tevye's daughters are all played. Tzeitel, the oldest, played by Janet Grzywacz G., is an emotionally powerful character. The way she handles Motel, her intended husband, in both words and gestures shows clearly who will eventually be the boss in that household. She handles herself well, portraying a set of emotions ranging from defiance to joy. The second daughter, Hodel (Melinda Blair French) is charming in the way she moves about the stage. During her duet with Perchik (Christopher Esolen), she glides across the floor with the grace of a ballerina. She is the best singer in the company, as demonstrated in the song "Far From the Home I Love" which she sings at a railway station before leaving to

join her husband in Siberia. Chava, played by Lisa Ann MacClusky, is convincing in her display of deep feeling when pleading with her father for acceptance after marrying out of the faith.

Motel, played by David Smith '85, is an excellent wimp. It is easy to empathize with his anxieties as he works up the courage to ask Tevye for Tzeitel's hand.

Linda Shaffir '82, plays the perfect hen-picking mother — when Golda is on the stage, all hands are busy by her orders. Tevye has almost as much trouble dealing with her as he does with his own emotions; she is the only person on the stage who can dominate him for any length of time. Yente, the matchmaker, seems as though she could go on talking forever. She is portrayed by Bonnie Derman '84, as quintessential gossip, constantly spreading all manner of trivia throughout the town.

Guy Consolmagno '84, plays a somewhat feeble rabbi who seems ready to agree with anyone about almost anything. This interpretation is fairly humorous, but it is unconvincing when he makes the decision for the villagers to pack up their things and move at the end of the play. The ghost of Fruham Sarah, played by Natalie Lorenz '84, appears as more of a humorous character than a scary one in Tevye's dream. Towering ten feet high, she comes out onto the stage with all of the grace possible for an actress riding on top of an actor's shoulders. As for the fiddler, he plays beautifully, but someone should loan him an old, faded fiddle, because the one he uses is the brightest thing on the stage visually as well as acoustically.

The set was one of the worst I have ever seen at a MTG production. One cloth building front sagged when it was down, and hung obtrusively in the air when it was up. All of the rooms in which scenes took place opened into the center of town, so that no matter where the scene took place, some sense of the town's center was fused into it.

On the whole, the show is well staged. With the exception of the dream scene the production was well blocked. The dance scenes involving the chorus, however, still needed a little polish as of last Saturday's performance. They were characterized by sporadic clumsiness, and at least one dancer was out of step.

In general, the performance was good, but not up to the standards usually maintained by the Musical Theater Guild.

Although a good distance from being perfect, *Fiddler on the Roof* is an enjoyable timeout from the daily grind. The final performances will be given tonight and tomorrow evening at Kresge at 8pm. So *nu*, what are you waiting for... go out and buy tickets!

Tom Grycewicz

Napoleon, Original production by Abel Gance, reconstructed by Kevin Brownlow and Francis Ford Coppola. Showing tonight through Sunday at the Metropolitan Center.

Can you imagine if someone found a previously unknown Shakespeare play in a dusty attic? This is the only analogy I can make to the discovery of the 1927 silent film, *Napoleon vu par gance* (Napoleon seen by Gance). Abel Gance made this film in France just before the era of sound, when no one wanted to see silents anymore. Now we know better.

The film was painstakingly reconstructed by Kevin Brownlow, who found pieces of it in archives all over the world. Francis Ford Coppola co-opted it, and commissioned his father to write the original score. Carmine Coppola has been touring America and is currently in Boston with an orchestra until Saturday.

Napoleon is unique. Many movies have been labelled 'epic,' but this film truly is. Its power is astonishing, overwhelming. It just won't fit on a small screen.

We open the film with a battle — Napoleon and his schoolmates in a snowball fight. The little boy who plays Napoleon is incredibly intense. Even then, people knew that he was going places. The scene is full of foreshadowing — nothing that happens in Napoleon's life is accident; he is fated to become the leader of his country.

The theme of fate runs through the film, giving it a mythical dimension. When Napoleon is stranded at sea, run out of his native Corsica, he is picked up by his brothers' boat, *Le Hasard* (Chance or Fate). He runs into Josephine many times, and when they finally meet we flash back through their previous encounters. Everything is according to a grand design.

The most stunning achievements of this film are technical: not the gizmo effects of a George Lucas but with a loftier purpose in mind. There are things in this film I've

never seen anywhere else, and this film is from 1927!

In one scene, we are at a ball. The camera swirls through the action with gaiety and abandon. It's stunning, dramatic and exhilarating. Over and over again, Gance finds visual metaphors like this.

In another dramatic scene, Napoleon is told of his destiny to conquer at the Convention, the center of the Revolution. The martyred ghosts of the cause tell him that the revolution will die if it is confined

to France and he must spread it throughout Europe. The images of the leaders flicker and fade hauntingly, chillingly accompanied by organ music.

There are so many grand moments like this, I could go on and on. However, I'll hold myself back and just mention the most extraordinary. Throughout the film, we are viewing one small screen. All of a sudden, the curtain unfolds and we have three screens! The vista is panoramic, and the audience lets out an audible gasp.

It's as if Gance's vision was too large for the small pictures of his day. The explosion of possibilities offered by the three adjacent images boggles the mind. He shows us three sides of the same event; or a closeup of Napoleon, surrounded by the clouds, looking like a god; or, most breathtakingly, a scene of pitched battle, the three screens tinted and one red, one white, one blue (the colors of the French flag) as the orchestra plays the *Marseillaise*. The audience bursts into cheers and it is over.

At this point, someone came to the stage and announced that Abel Gance had died at the age of 92 that evening. Gance had fortunately been aware of the film's rediscovery and its success in America. A vindication of his incredible vision, the greatness of *Napoleon* is an inspiration and a challenge to modern filmmakers, and to all of us.

Howard Oster



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New York University Visits Your Campus to Answer Questions on the M.B.A. Program

Located in the heart of the Wall Street area, New York University's Graduate School of Business Administration has trained students for executive positions for over 60 years. A recent survey by Standard & Poor's ranked New York University number 2 nationwide as the source of graduate education for chief executives in major companies. On Monday, November 9, an admissions officer

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will be on campus to discuss the quality and flexibility of the graduate business program. Check with the Office of Career Development for sign-up schedule and further information.

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The MIT Musical Theatre Guild presents

Fiddler on the Roof

November 6, 7, 12, 13 & 14 at 8pm
November 8 at 3:30pm

Tickets: \$5 / \$3 MIT students /
\$2.50 children 12 & under (Nov. 8 only!)

Kresge Auditorium

81 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge
Information & Reservations: 253-6204



Tickets Available in Lobby 10