Bringing down the Forum

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way To the Forum, with music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, performed by the MIT Musical Theatre Guild Thursday night in the Salu. Further performances tonight and tomorrow night at 8 pm and Sunday at 3 pm; tickets $3 for MIT students, $5 for senior citizens and other students, $5 for all others.

At the Forum, you are never quite sure if you are in the Forum, in New York, or in the Boston suburb of Cambridge. But since the play is about a Roman/toga/square dance/Washingtonian/old money merger, the setting seems appropriate.

The Forum is also where The Music Man prefigures itself. In a scene where the Forum oratory school is looking for a new master orator, an aspiring candidate is asked to give a speech about Vermont. From this point on, the play is on its way to becoming "The Music Man in Rome." And not a bad place to be.

The Forum, when you think about it, is a modern day variation of the musical "Pseudolus." The current edition of "Pseudolus" is not as strong as "Pseudolus." It's a comedy set in Roman times. Even if you are unfamiliar with the show you will recognize the Stephen Sondheim opening number COMEDY TONIGHT. The cast performs this admirably, completely drowning out the cacophony of the orchestra.

Jean (Stephanie Honig), an adolescent boy, at times seems to behave more like a pre-school boy. He has supposedly fallen in love with Philia (Lauren Singer '86) and will free Pseudolous, his slave, if Pseudolous can deliver her to him. Philia also has trouble with her stage attitude. Although her lines make it clear that she is in love with Hero, somehow her actions don't relay that information.

Given the circumstances, A Funny Thing Happened On the Way To the Forum is a good show. MTG is obviously operating under low budget and deserves the full support of the MIT community.

Ronald E. Becker