MTG’s Kismet lacks romance and human dimension

By JONATHAN RICHMOND

M T G’S KISMET is a production with a few peeks, but many problems. The three Princesses of Ababu — Leslie Metler ’88, Sara Botrefeld ’91 and Corinne Waythak ’89 — were the brightest of the gems. Clad in leopard skins and adopting vivid jungle-warrior poses, they were very funny. Their special branch of spicy dancing was daringly executed. Noelle Rodrick put on a potent dancing display, too. Lisa Redhaas-Olson G, playing Lahiime, also had an effective stage presence, restless and slippery, warm and human. Susan Ella W ’91 in Marvinaeh and Michael Laroche ’90 as the Caligh also had their moments; they sang “Strangers in Paradise” nicely. Saul Rentkoff ’88 sang “Was I Wrong?” effectively, as well.

The orchestra, directed by Deepro Chakrabarty ’88 put on a good show for much of the time. The flute playing of Karen Dickason ’87 was particularly high-caliber, and Larry Taylor ’91 was characterful on the piano.

Unfortunately, there is little else positive to be said about this production. Kismet Auditorium perhaps provided the biggest constraint, for few of the cast were able to project effectively into such a large space. Lines were delivered without clarity and, worse, without feeling. This was a production in which most of the performers looked lost for too much of the time, and in which there was little on a romantic or other human scale.

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Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century produces smooth, glowing sound

By JONATHAN RICHMOND

FRANS BRUGGEN’S ORCHESTRA of the Eighteenth Century has a smooth, glowing sound, rich in coloration, and not incapable of excitement. Bruggen began his Symphony Hall concert with Mozart’s Overture to Don Giovanni. It was played suggestively if a trifle ponderously.

Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 20, K. 466 followed, with John Gibbons putting in a sterling performance on the fortepiano. Gibbons is a master at drawing complex emotions from simple themes. His attack is straightforward, accurate and elegant. The clarity of his playing — aided by the short resouene time of the fortepiano — is a revelation. Each note is heard separately, but the reflective quality of the nobly made of these discrete identities and the silences in-between is inspiring.

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Some of the players tried to overact to fill the gap between stage and audience, but this backfired, making their performances seem less intimate and less lifelike. Lines were delivered without clarity and, worse, without feeling. This was a production in which most of the performers looked lost for too much of the time, and in which there was little on a romantic or other human scale.

In MTG’s favor, this production had an unusually high proportion of MIT students; it is good to see the organization out to develop graduate talent. The standard of Theatre Guild musicianship continues to be high, and there were some notable performances.

To avoid the pitfalls of this production, MTG needs to be more careful in selecting scripts — Kismet is not the most inspired choice they could have made in the first place. A choice that would be a performing space suited to the strengths of available talent, and more attention should be given to providing firm direction and guidance to enable performers to exploit their abilities to the full.

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