

## ARTS

## A strong and shocking journey through Landscapes of the mind

### BOOGIE WOOGIE LANDSCAPES

A play by ntozake shange.

Presented by the MIT Black Students Union.

Directed by Kirsten Hoyte '90.

At McCormick Hall (gymnasium), Friday and Saturday, April 8 and 9, 8 pm. Free.

By BARAK A. YEDIDIA

**D**ONCHA WANNA BE MUSIC? Layla (Angela Conley), a pretty young black girl in bare feet and a yellow blouse dances out to the strains of Wynton Marsalis, to begin a sometimes exuberant, sometimes excruciating exploration of her own psyche. Five night-life companions ("n.l.c.'s") eloquently accompany her on her journey into her

dreams. In the course of the evening the five companions play many roles, from Jesus to her mother to her boyfriend. They all agree on one thing — that Layla's life is "too full for a black and white and skinny life."

Conley's performance is strongest when she is dancing alone or interacting directly with one or more of her companions. She begins and ends the play with a few minutes of dancing. This is a daring decision on the part of the director Kirsten Hoyte '90, but Conley vindicates the decision by maintaining the audience's interest in her solitary silence and motion.

When she has a scene with n.l.c.#4 (Jason Vickers '90) playing her boyfriend, one feels that Layla can do much better for herself than this boy reciting poetry. This

may be the fault of playwright ntozake shange; the poetry Vickers has to recite pales in comparison to Layla's prose.

Some of the early scenes in the first act lack direction and coherence. The night companions drift in and out of shadows, running on and on in very abstract terms about the pains of being a black girl in modern society. These early speeches lack variety in tone quality. Vicker breaks the monotony with a fiery bit as Jesus, and for a moment the stage is charged with energy which unfortunately quickly drops off.

The rest of the production, however, only improves. n.l.c numbers 1 and 3 (Georgette Redmond '88 and Hope Cooper '90) expound hilariously on their plans for the reduction of rape while n.l.c.#5 takes on the *New York Times* and Ronald

Reagan in a speech that ends the first act on a high point.

The second half of the play has none of the weakness of the first act. n.l.c.#2 (Karen McFarland '90) is adorable as the young girl in the middle of a large family, telling stories of petty family squabbles and horrible racism, shocking her audience by recounting the stories with the same captivating childish wonder.

Cooper's monologue concerning being born a girl in a male dominated world is a notably fine moment in the second act.

Hoyte's direction, while at times uneven, is strong overall. The script is abstract at times but strong performances by the actors overcome whatever difficulties other areas of production presented.

## Damn Yankees: a dated, predictable show with good songs and laughs

### DAMN YANKEES

Produced by the Musical Theatre Guild. Thursday, Friday and Saturday, April 8 and 9, 8pm. Saturday Matinee, 2 pm. Kresge Little Theatre.

By SIDHU BANERJEE

**D**AMN YANKEES, originally produced in the 1950's, is quite dated. But its comic elements and musical numbers have an innocent cuteness that is fun to watch even now.

The year is 1957. The Washington Senators are at their chronically last place position in the major leagues. Joe Boyd (David Magill), a middle-aged Senator fan, is undaunted. Even as those "Damn Yankees" win yet another game against the Senators, Joe has dreams of Washington success, dreams almost as big as his lifelong dream to lead his team to victory.

Enter the devil, incarnate as Mr. Applegate (Saul Resnikoff '88), with the power to grant Joe's wish for a small price. The Faustian musical adventure that unfolds in *Damn Yankees* is humorous and fun.

Playing in the Kresge Little Theatre



Mark D. Virtue/The Tech

The ball players sing about putting their "Heart" into baseball in MTG's *Damn Yankees*.



Mark D. Virtue/The Tech

The devilish Mr. Applegate, Saul Resnikoff '88, reminisces about past death and destruction in "Those Were the Days."



Mark D. Virtue/The Tech

Mr. Applegate absconds Joe Boyd, David Magill, for abandoning evil for his wife Meg, Margot Martens, in "A Man Doesn't Know."

poses some choreographic challenges; the limited size by necessity confines the action and movement of some of the bigger musical pieces. But the songs with few characters on stage were very well done. In one humorous and fun number involving Joe (who is changed into the star player Joe Hardy, played by Matt Giamporcario '85) and temptress Lola (Rina Cerulli '86), Lola sexily slinks about, remarking "what-

tle awkward at times on stage, but gave good musical renditions with Margot in "Near to You" and "A Man Doesn't Know." The show stealer by far was devilish Saul Resnikoff. With his little-boy "I just stole the cookies from the cookie jar" grin and his natural ham tendencies on stage, he gave just the right amount of well-timed comedy and presence to the scenes he played.



Mark D. Virtue/The Tech

Lola uses "A Little Brains, A Little Talent" to enchant Mr. Applegate.

ever Lola wants, Lola gets." And in a show stealer, the devil Applegate reminisces about past plagues and tragedies in history, when "Those were the good old days."

Several characters turned in good acting and singing performances. Margot Martens, who played Joe's lonely wife, has a strong and emotional voice. And the ensemble of baseball players gave good group performances with their barbershop quartet style singing in "The Game" and "Heart." Matt Giamporcario seemed a lit-

The set crew suffered from a few opening-night jitters — there were a few "thunks" from backstage and mikes on when they shouldn't have been. The musical direction was good, and the string and trumpet sections gave especially good performances.

*Damn Yankees* has a predictable story line; one can be sure that good will triumph in the end. But MTG makes the trip to the conclusion an enjoyable one, with comedy and good music.