

## Brilliant stained glass windows are an illuminating joy

**JOHN LA FARGE**

Exhibit at the Museum of Fine Arts.  
Through May 1.

By CHRISTOPHER J. ANDREWS

ONLY ONE WEEK REMAINS to see the beautiful stained-glass windows that are part of the John La Farge retrospective appearing at the Museum of Fine Arts. Best known for his interior treatment of Trinity Church in Boston, La Farge is attracting increasing scholarly attention for his anticipation of European art trends. A painter, muralist, illustrator, and brilliant artisan, La Farge is an extraordinarily versatile artist who created exquisite decorative works.

The most spectacular part of the exhibit lies in a large darkened room. Unadorned wall space separates approximately ten backlit stained glass panels, showpiece windows commissioned for patrician homes all over New England.

La Farge applied his considerable talents as a painter to the art of stained-glass win-

dow building. Unlike traditional stained-glass technique, where artisans apply bits of opaque black paint to add details to the colored glass, La Farge used translucent paints to shade his glass fragments. The result is a work of uncanny three-dimensionality, more like an eerily glowing electric oil painting than a traditionally almost-cubist stained-glass panel.

Generally acknowledged as the greatest innovator in stained-glass windows, La Farge creates romantic and smoothly-textured windows out of an inherently granular medium. Marbled and rippled glass offers an additional visual treat, where lines and patterns are a part of the glass itself.

The elements of Japanese prints find themselves in both La Farge's stained-glass work and his illustration; his adoption of Japanese forms predated Whistler's explorations of the same themes.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of La Farge's far-thinking imagination is his reluctance to abandon nineteenth-century figural styles. Impressionistic styles (seemingly predating the first "impressionist"

showing in France) are incorporated into classical landscape and portraiture styles, without the radical shift into Modernism found among his colleagues and immediate successors.

A very creative and innovative artist who assimilated his new techniques into classical art forms and styles, La Farge is increasingly considered to be a central figure in nineteenth-century art. While his subtle experiments might not attract as much attention as a radical figure such as Picasso, La Farge has certainly created a large collection of beautiful art objects, including a delightful collection of stained-glass windows.



John  
La Farge

The Museum of Fine Arts is located at 465 Huntington Avenue, one mile west of Copley Square, on the MBTA Arborway Green Line (E train). The museum is open Tuesday through Sunday from 10 am until 5 pm, and special exhibits are open until 10 pm on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. Admission is free to MIT students with ID, and \$5 to the general public.

## A small stage is big enough for a crapshoot at Baker

**GUYS AND DOLLS**

Baker House Productions.  
Directed by Ben DeSousa '89.  
Baker House, April 21-24.

By HALVARD K. BIRKELAND

**B**AKER HOUSE PRODUCTIONS just closed another successful musical production. Playing to a packed house on Friday night, *Guys and Dolls* was a light, enjoyable musical set in pre-World War II Manhattan.

The show provided many exhilarating moments and memorable songs. Jeff Kim '91 and F. Burris Jackes '90 turned in superb performances as Nicely-Nicely Johnson and Nathan Detroit, performances that were not matched by the rest of the ensemble. At times, the chorus performed mechanically, as if they were uncomfortable on stage.

Several of the characters were portrayed vividly. Nicely-Nicely and Harry the Horse (Ben DeSousa '89) were two of the colorful big-city crap shooters. Nathan Detroit,

a shifty-eyed and broke gambler who organized "the longest running floating crap game in New York," earned the audience's sympathy with "The Oldest Established." The audience followed Nathan for the rest of the musical through his rocky relationship with Miss Adelaide (Sue Behson '88), his fiancée of fourteen years.

Nathan searched for a place to hold his crap game throughout the opening scenes. After being hounded by crooked Lt. Brannigan (Mike Caren '91), Nathan found a location but still needed \$1,000 in up-front money. Hoping to win the money on an easy bet, he wagered the high-rolling Sky Masterson (Jeff Kim '89) that he could not take the frigid missionary Sarah Brown (Stephanie Squarcia '90) to Havana. Sky succeeded in wooing Sarah to join him in Cuba, and the act closed with the moving duet "I've Never Been in Love Before."

The second act revolved around the Sky-Sarah love affair and the crap game. After playing craps all night in Sarah's mission, the gambling moved to the sewers under Manhattan. The high point of the show occurred during Sky's energetic rendition

of "Luck Be a Lady" where he challenges the shooters to wager their appearance at Sarah's prayer meeting against his prize of \$1000.

The choreography was the most disappointing aspect of the show; it varied from outstanding in "The Crap Game Dance" to abysmal in the "Hot Box" scenes. The production suffered from having too many choreographers (three), and not enough experienced dancers.

The blocking and use of the set posed problems for the audience. In several scenes, unimportant characters cluttered the downstage area, burying the important action behind them. Also, whenever the actors knelt or sat, they couldn't be seen by half the house. Actors rarely stood on the raised platforms, where they could be easily seen. Instead, actors often sat on the platforms, where they were too low to be visible.

The orchestra did not play the simple score as well as they should have. For example, the Overture was extremely weak, flawed with missed entrances, wavering pitch and poor tonal quality.

The set designers were, however, sensitive to the limited resources of the Baker House dining hall. Peter Colao '89 and Jackes attempted to raise the upstage area to make the actors more visible, but the platforms were not used by the director, DeSousa. Colao and Jackes also made excellent use of the central, descending staircase as a phonebooth for the telephone scene.

The lighting designers were not as successful. Their use of downlights and strip lighting was a good attempt at varying the atmosphere on stage, but poorly placed amber and blue lights resulted in characters that changed color as they walked up and down the stage. Furthermore, the lights on the house pipe left alternating bright and dark spots. Given the limited facilities, though, the set and lights were admirable attempts to make a dining hall into a theater.

*Guys and Dolls* was a fun, light musical from the fifties. If future Baker House productions are as good, they will be worth seeing (but only from the first four rows.)

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