Morrison address cultural affirmation

The THECB.

The new production of Princess Ida isn't up to the high standards of many of the Gilbert & Sullivan Players' recent offerings. But although there is little that is outstanding, the Players provide an entertaining evening nonetheless, and quite a few laughs along the way.

Princess Ida might well have been a story about Wellesley and MIT, including as it does such elements as a women's college with upper-crust pretensions and a bunch of bumptious men. You've guessed it, this is about a guy chasing an unattainable girl, and the would-beesorcerer of this show in Hilarion, played by Tal Workman. Workman's voice was weak, unfortunately, and his acting on the mammoth side as well. The two friends Hilarion takes along, flown, Jeffery and Cyril, played by Alex Panayi and Derek Herrera '92 respectively, were much more characterfully portrayed, with some favorite fairy tales in creating a single even bigger one. The act opens with the stories of Jack and the Beanstalk, Cinderella, and the Baker and his wife. These latter two are the folks from whom Red Riding Hood gets her goodies, and they are the focus of the story. The wife must enter the woods to assemble the ingredients for a potion required by their neighbor, the Witch, to remove a curse preventing them from having a child. In their search, the Baker and his wife meet up with Jack, Red Riding Hood, and the Wolf, as well as Cinderella, Rapunzel, and their respective Princes. These characters are all busy with their own fairy tales, but each possesses one ingredient for the potion. By the end of Act One, the curse is lifted, Jack kills the giant and is rich from stolen gold, the Wolf is killed, each damsel gets her respective Prince, and the Witch is transformed by her potion into a beauty. All should live happily ever after? Well, almost.

Act Two finds our mostly happy cohorts forced into the Wood again to kill the giant's wife, who has come down to earth on an errant beanstalk to get revenge for her husband's untimely demise. A good deal of bickering and finger-pointing ensues. Unfortunately, none of the characters get stepped on in the process, but the plot line plays on the audience's childhood sense of who these characters should be, pitting it in opposition with who they actually are—a bunch of real people stuck in some rather odd circumstances. The characters become entwining through their more human qualities. Horny Princes, a glutinous Red Riding Hood, a malcontent Cinderella, and others make for great fun.

There were pluses and minuses to staging such a large show in Kresge's Little Theatre. The small space seemed rather cluttered most of the time, and during numbers featuring the full company there was barely enough room for the audience to extend the small stage, but the effort was insufficient enough to seem an afterthought. Also very distracting and avoidable were moments in full light when members of the cast were singing and stage hands were moving set pieces around directly behind them. To the directors' credit, I must say that there were many extremely funny sight gags, none of which I will spoil for you. On the whole, the show had great potential on a cake that was only fair.

At the poorer end of the performances, the Narrator (Andy Kraft '95) was more of a bad Rod Serling impression than anything else, and Kraft's singing nearly ruined a few touching duets. Another major problem was the flat performance by the Witch (Jeannette Ryan '92). She was neither a scary enough crone to motivate the action of the last act, nor a convincing siren in the second. Also, her uneven singing downplayed all the key songs meant to bring out the play's main themes.

The biggest problem seemed to be an abundance of bad direction. There are some absolutely wonderful moments in the musical, however, which when taken together just add up to the price of admission. Go to hear every note the Baker's Wife (Emily Prenner '93) sings, especially her introspective interpretation of "Moments in the Wood." Go to feel the pain in the Baker's (Rob Dyckman '94) absolutely disheartened rendition of "No More." Also look for a magical spark that the play's main themes.

There are some absolutely wonderful moments in the musical, however, which when taken together just add up to the price of admission. Go to hear every note the Baker's Wife (Emily Prenner '93) sings, especially her introspective interpretation of "Moments in the Wood." Go to feel the pain in the Baker's (Rob Dyckman '94) absolutely disheartened rendition of "No More." Also look for a magical spark between these two in all the scenes they act in together. Be ready to be charmed and delighted by the exuberance of Cinderella's Prince (Mike Dyckman '94) as he bounds about the kingdom. Laugh loudly at the creative "Agony" duet between him and Rapunzel's Prince (Courtney Pieck '92), will extol missing "Oh! Abundance" and the abundant "Unicorns."