

Theatre

"Forum" presentation "inspired lunacy"

challenging as "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum"? This very challenge, the bright sparkle of characterisation in the songs and lyrics, visibly delighted the mostly young amateur performers. The result is inspired lunacy. I enjoyed the opening night of "Forum" last week at the John Elliott Theatre in Georgetown, and I hope that the performances scheduled for Thursday, Friday and Saturday this week, 8 p.m. at the John Elliott Theatre, will be packed.

It is a large production. According to the program, about 50 people on and behind the stage and in the pit, made it possible. Aside from the producers Maureen Walker and Keith Mills, four talented women, the artistic director Vesta Jorgensen, the musical director Debbie Tilson, the Choreographers Tanya Abulnar and Diane Atkinson, have shaped the performances as well as they could.

The set design by Gerry Andrew has its own built-in comedy, and the costumes by Carolyn Hooper are attractive and, at times, truly ingenious.

There are so many stories criss-crossing each other in "Forum", and accordingly so many performers with big parts, that it is difficult for me to decide whom to mention first.

I will start with Philia, who is at the centre of all the plots. Elisabeth Griffin is charming as Philia. She is tossed around by the sudden turns of the story like a plump, shiny balloon in the wind, and she relishes her victimisation.

Closest to her is Vince Staltari's Hero, a moony upper-class kid in love with Philia. He looks and acts the part of the spindly legged adolescent in the torment of his first infatuation.

Around them are Joe Del Guidice and Gord McLeod as Pseudolus and Hysterium, the household slaves who set the story in motion and keep it at fever pitch.

Cedric Briggs and Margaret Eggleton-Kaye as Senex and Domina, the snooty parents of Hero, the former an aging playboy, the latter a domineering lady secretly in love with her own husband. Dave Atkinson is Lycus, a dealer in courtesans. The lovely and tempestuous females he offers for sale are Christine Ford as Tintinabula, Sarah Mills as Panacea, Jodi Fraser and Kim Hanna as the

Geminae, Shannon Marshall as Vibrata and Mary Bilik as Gymnasia.

These six have no lines to speak, but the choreographers have given them each dance routines that satirize standard male fantasies. We are given the dominatrix, the wild cat, the erotic belly dancer, and so on.

Jack Ferguson is Erronius, an

almost blind old man, who is seen shuffling across the stage, searching for his children, that were stolen from him in their infancy.

Last, but not least, I must mention Roderick Macintosh as Miles Gloriosus, a great and pompous warrior, a wonderfully vain fellow with a bellowing voice, an abiding passion for himself and

amazingly smooth thighs. He marches in with three of the dafdest soldiers you have ever seen, convincingly played by Paul d'Entremont, Doug MacDougall and Craig Marshall. Did I write 50 people on and behind

the stage? At times it seems that there are a lot more than that milling around. There are

eunuchs and bird sellers, and several big ladies in silks that look as if they just cam over from Spain, maybe, to have a good shopping day in the greatest city of the ancient world.

The time is 200 years before the Christian era, it is a day in spring, and the notion of sin is foreign to everybody present. Wonderful entertainment.



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