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'My Fair Lady' production a highly commended effort

By JOHN SOMMER
Herald Special

Some people, and I am one of them, believe that "My Fair Lady" is the greatest musical of all time. "My Fair Lady" is based on George Bernard Shaw's witty and intelligent play "Pygmalion," in which Professor Henry Higgins makes a bet that he can turn a cockney guttersnipe into a proper lady. Shaw took his story from classical mythology.

Shaw's play had its first performance in Vienna, of all places, in 1913, in German. In 1914 the play opened in London with Mrs. Patrick Campbell as Eliza.

Right from the start, attempts were made to fashion an operetta.

In 1933 Gabriel Pascal made the movie "Pygmalion," with Wendy Hiller and Leslie Howard, which Shaw rather liked. He did not like Pascal's ending, however, which makes Eliza return to her professor-jailer.

After Shaw's death in 1950, Pascal asked Rodgers and Hammerstein to create a musical from the play, but they declined. Other composers were approached, including Cole Porter, Leonard Bernstein, and even Menotti, but all declined.

Finally, Alan Jay Lerner wrote the book, and lyrics, and Frederick Loewe composed the music for "My Fair Lady", which opened on Broadway in 1956 with Rex Harrison as Higgins and the almost unknown Julie Andrews as Eliza. It was an overwhelming success with 2,717

performances on Broadway alone.

Consecutively, "My Fair Lady" was produced in 22 countries in 11 translations.

In 1964, the movie version of "My Fair Lady" came out, again with Harrison as Higgins, but with the glamorous Audrey Hepburn as Eliza. Cecil Beaton designed the sets and costumes and they were a WOW. Now we are having a production of "My Fair Lady" in Georgetown. I recommend it highly.

In any production of "My Fair Lady" the roles of Eliza, Higgins and the dustman Alfred Dolittle are crucial.

Georgetown Globe Productions are fortunate in having Brigida Callaghan, who is a fierce and never quite tamed Eliza, Neville Worsnop, who is a delightfully self-absorbed and befuddled Henry Higgins, and Ken Gorin, who is a truly proletarian Dolittle.

Audrey Houston as Mrs. Higgins, has the required warmth, and Derek Ashenden as Colonel Pickering is serviceable.

All the others, more or less, do what they are told to do under the lively direction of Shirley Ashenden.

Many of the scenes are played in front of the curtain, and while this device works very well for the scenes with only two or three characters, it does not work well with crowds. I occasionally had visions of clusters of prancing cockneys vanishing into the orchestra pit.

The choreography, directed by Evelyn Webster, is wonderfully rude and deliciously low, as Professor Higgins would say. By comparison, the upper class in the Ascot and Embassy scenes moves under the constraints of rigor mortis. Hilarious!

The reception and ball at the Embassy was a bit of a let-down for me. This is Eliza's crowning. She should be the centre of attention instead of the Queen of Transylvania. The orchestra, under the direction of Terry Champ, was at times too loud. Lerner's lyrics are so good that I want to hear every word. They must not be drowned in sound. But these are minor flaws.

I saw "My Fair Lady" on the first night and I want to see it again when the enormous production (more than a hundred people are involved in it) has settled in more.

"My Fair Lady" is going to be at the John Elliott Theatre in Georgetown for a while. There will be performances on November 28, 29 and 30, in the evening, a matinee performance on Sunday, December 1, and again evening performances on December 4, 5, 6 and 7.



Globe theatre's fall production, the well-known musical, "My Fair Lady" opened last Thursday at the John Elliott Theatre, in Georgetown. Pictured above, Eliza Dolittle, (Brigida Callaghan), is selling her flowers to theatre patron Colonel Pickering, (Derek Ashender), during the production's opening scene. The musical continues through Nov. 28-30 and Dec. 1, 4, 5, 6, 7. Tickets can be purchased at Royal Lepage R.E., 170 Guelph Street, or at the John Elliott Theatre Box Office. (Herald Photo)

Movie Review

Addams Family fails

By Dawn Wood
Herald Special

The Addams Family, directed by Barry Sonnenfeld, is another in a series of silver screen debuts of pop culture TV venue classics. In this one, Angelica Huston leads as Morticia Addams.

Unlike most other productions, The Addams Family does not draw on super heroes (Batman, Superman, Popeye, the Star Trek gang). Instead, it is the return of an off-beat series not unlike today's Married With Children.

The Addams Family tries very hard to reproduce the cliches of the TV series such as Gomez's (Raul Julia) passionate reactions to Morticia's utterances in French, and Morticia's habit of cutting off the heads of roses before arranging the stems in a vase.

Unfortunately, the movie doesn't go beyond these flashbacks.

The plot centres around an attempt by a fictitious doctor (Elizabeth Wilson) to have Fester (Christopher Lloyd) steal the family fortune while he is suffering amnesia and believing himself to be her only son. The plot does not get better than this. Then again, was it ever meant to?

What the plot does do, however, is provide a venue for the delivery of the trademark Addams Family pastimes and cliches that we know so well.

On this account the movie does deliver, though Thing (living hand) and Cousin It are definitely overplayed well beyond their occasional appearances on the old TV sitcom.

Like the many movies of its genre, The Addams Family shows sparkle through its supporting cast; specially the performance of Christina Ricci who is Wednesday, Morticia and Gomez's public school daughter. She carries off the character

flawlessly, being absolutely deadpan (no pun intended) in her role. In fact, she along with brother Pugsley are the only ones who don't seem to be consciously trying to mimic their TV series predecessors. This is in part due to their age (having been born long after the series was off the air).

Judging by the audience who went to see The Addams Family, some high expectations have been made. They will be met if the expectation is to see an extended play of the TV favorite, but if something original is sought, seek again. The only noteworthy originality is in the "Addams Grove" theme music, performed by the Hammer.

The movie is appropriate for all family members, and is a good piece of nostalgia.

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