

'Peace' doesn't work: an anthology of total misses

Michael Silverblatt
Spectrum Theater Critic

Peace, as presented in the Fillmore Room last week just does not work. It was embarrassing and childish. have one grace that forgives the mawkishness of many of their productions - spontaneity. This spontaneity has made fascinating such otherwise tacky plays as Ron Tavel's *Gorilla Queen* and Tim Reynold's *Peace*.

This spontaneity was almost totally lacking in the production that disgraced the bouyant and bouncy score by Al Carmines.

The Off-Broadway director, Lawrence Kornfeld was the main cause of the delightful, fast-moving pace of his show. Director (and I use the term sarcastically) William Lurie mis-used, misstaged and mismounted his production (and cast) to the point that the production was almost an anthology of total misses.

The plot (and I use the term sparsely) concerns Trygaeus, a discontented Greek who flies to Heaven on a dung-beetle in order to talk with God and beg him to bring *Peace* back to Earth.

Peace - Piece

Tim Reynold's book is rather foolish - it runs from bad burlesque

Tim Reynold's book is rather foolish - it runs from bad burlesque and bad camp to bad Aristophanes - but it can be fun. Off-Broadway,

Unfortunately, Mr. Lurie, has made a lame-brained attempt to make the play 'relevant' by emphasizing the serious aspects of *Peace*. It should be noted here and now that there ARE none.

Thus the production became a hodge-podge of mistaken intentions that clearly embarrass the performers. This total mis-interpretation becomes clear when one examines the music.

Al Carmines, the composer, can do anything with music. He hops from Gershwin to Handel with the flick of a key-signature. His songs range from the high operatic camp of "Aumbing" (a brilliant parody of overplayed oratorios) to the true grace of "Things Starting To Grow Again" and "Athenia". He can do ragtime musical comedy composers because he can do everything they can do - and do it better.

Mucked up

But, alas, the omnipresent Mr. Lurie has mucked this one up, too. He has squeezed all the joy out of Carmine's music. Carmine's music is special. Mr. Lurie ignores the fact that the music parodies very definite styles and chooses instead to stage the songs (and,

indeed, the whole second act) as straight musical comedy.

This renders the second act incomprehensible. The book and the music indicate pure southern minstrel show replete with blackface, tableaus and comedy routines. Instead it emerges as some distorted representation of a high-school graduation.

I cannot heap enough abuse on Mr. Lurie - he has done an insufferable job. His actors are quite clearly ashamed and humiliated by the stupidity of what he has placed on stage and it shows in their performances. I cannot believe that he has not had a hand in the choreography (attributed to one, Joan Morocco) - it, too, shows no understanding of the music. Aside from one rather rousing number, "All the Dark is Turned to Sunshine," the work is totally pedestrian.

There are inane and hopeless attempts made by the performers to get the audience to clap in time in "The Peace Medley." (Too bad the director had not read the stage directions in the script).

Clap??

In general, Lurie (who applauded after every number with the fervor and precision of audiences at Ted Mack's Amateur Hour - believe me the figure is NOT gratuitous) and his gangling technical staff were often the only ones who "caught the clap" so to speak.

There were, however, some creditable performances - despite all sorts of odds.

Joan Friedman is amazing - she has a comic sense that truly astounds. Her number, "My Name's Abundance" was a tour de force not to be forgotten. Discovering Miss Friedman was so delightful it almost made one forget the disaster surrounding her. She, and she alone deserves much, much better.

Joseph Zavisca does a nice job with Trygaeus. He sings very well, and is a perfect musical comedy hero. Within the limitations he faced, he sowed a neat talent for comic delivery. I have seen Mr.



Hermes

Alan Teicher as Hermes during the Posthorn Players production of *Peace*.

Zavisca work better with better directors. He does what he can here and does it extremely well.

Alan Teicher, in his first major role gives an amusing performance as a homosexual Hermes, but soon his screaming queen mannerisms and delivery become wearing.

Sedentary strut

Elaine Barron as Mother hams, mugs and makes a general fool of herself and of everyone else on stage. Her opening number "Thru Excessive Concern.. is a Merman-esque belter - she reduces it to a sedentary strut. She overplays so badly that one wonders that she has actually had experience in professional theatre. Her busy little hands are never still. She has, at times, a brassy, pleasing soprano voice - but it is

never used to any suitable effect.

Deserving of somewhat favorable mention are: Bruce Kaidon for a perfectly leering War, Bobbe Gasborro for a nice attempt in the role of Prosperity, and Kathleen Kammerar who nightly showed an increased sensitivity and comic zest in her portrayal of *Peace*.

In all, this was the most painfully awkward and amateurish production that I have ever seen - and just think, Mr. Lurie makes so many claims to professionalism. His cast may have deserved better; but his audience deserved a refund.

Next year, Mr. Lurie promises us "*Little Mary Sunshine*", another relevant piece.

I am sure he will outdo himself.

Mariposa Folk Festival

Joni Mitchell heads cast

The Mariposa Folk Festival, now entering into its tenth year, is the longest running folk festival still in business. Held on Toronto's beautiful Centre Island, this festival has managed to survive so long due to the combination of the rustic, unpolluted setting, limited sales, lots of good clean un-American music (that is to say commercialism just doesn't make it there) and a hard core of people that would travel a million miles out of their way to hear good folk music.

In the past such great stars as Joan Baez, Neil Young, Howlin' Wolf and Jean Ritchie have performed to delighted audiences

and this year is to be no exception.

Joni Mitchell, back to perform her first concert in North America in close to eight months, heads an all-start cast which includes James Taylor, Odetta, Ramblin' Jack Elliot, Doug Kershaw, David Rea, Merle Travis, Mississippi Fred McDowell, the always popular Michael Cooney and many more. During the day workshops are held in which professionals and amateurs alike can get together and play and talk music to their hearts' content. It is quite an education.

Indian music

New to the festival this year is

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a contingent of Indians from various tribes. They will be presenting their music and culture on their own time schedule, so if you want to find out when and what they're doing, you have to see the Indians personally. Dig it!

Another noteworthy group is the Perth County Conspiracy, who are members of a Canadian commune, and their main forte is a unique kind of musical theatre. They also plan to give out free of charge food that they grow in their commune.

From the opening act on Friday night of a group of Eskimo Drum Dancers to the closing act on Sunday night, Mariposa promises quite an exciting time for all. The tickets are inexpensive and can be purchased at the Norton Hall ticket office.

If you're looking for another Woodstock, Mariposa is not the place to come. Mariposa is a beautiful peace festival in its own right, and should be accepted as such. Woodstock people go follow your rainbow elsewhere. You can call me a fascist pig if you want. I don't give a fuck. But I'll "see you after the Revolution when, of course, it'll be business as usual."

Sherby Driftwood

GSA to have elections

Representation on the Graduate Student Association Executive Committee will be on a departmental basis as a result of a referendum which was overwhelmingly approved of recently.

As a result, each department will elect representatives to the Executive Committee on the basis of full time equivalency (FTE). An FTE is equal to 12 credit hours. This means that there will be one representative for up to 75 FTE, two for between 76 to 150 FTE, and three for 151 FTE and over.

The GSA requests that each graduate department plan an election after registration with adequate publicity before hand, and inform the Executive Committee of these plans at 215 Norton, ext. 5505.

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