“Comedy” Aims High, But Falls Short

By Jeremy B. Yoder
Editor-in-Chief

This spring’s Mainstage production “The World is a Comedy” aims at some pretty big targets: war, the human condition, and the cycle of violence from generation to generation. Unfortunately, it deals them only a glancing blow at best.

The fault doesn’t lie with the cast and crew. The ensemble, led by David Rohrer and Rachel Schroek, deliver a solid performance highlighted by Christie Benner’s energetic Registrar and young Sean Dunavan’s poignant Child.

Theatre Review: “The World is a Comedy”

An imaginatively-designed set, which blends ancient Egyptian and modern Arabic styles, serves as a fine backdrop for scenes set in such diverse locales as Cairo, the netherworld, a desert island, and a mad scientist’s laboratory. The production is also technically impressive by the standards of EMU theater, a technically impressive by the stand. The dream sequence is Al-Hakim’s means of tackling his chosen issues. In it Khaled lives through a series of reimaginings. Some of his lives, like the “president of a large company” or the mad scientist, are caricatures of different approaches to the problem of war. Another, a man living on a desert island poisoned by fallout from atomic bomb tests, is painfully sad.

But all this says nothing new about the problem of war. Recurring themes include the looming threat of the atom bomb, the inescapable cycle of war. Another, a man living on a desert island poisoned by fallout from atomic bomb tests, is painfully sad. The dream sequence is Al-Hakim’s means of tackling his chosen issues. In it Khaled lives through a series of reimaginings. Some of his lives, like the “president of a large company” or the mad scientist, are caricatures of different approaches to the problem of war. Another, a man living on a desert island poisoned by fallout from atomic bomb tests, is painfully sad. The play’s conclusion doesn’t seem to contain any new about the problem of war once and for all.

Finally, despite the title, the play is not all that funny. Translation from Arabic to western humor may be at fault, but nonetheless there are quite a few places where attempted comedy falls flat.

A recurring gag about salted fish, for instance, doesn’t quite hit home. The funniest parts of the performance are clearly unique to the EMU interpretation, as when a radio plays the opening song to “Mr. Ed” and, after a channel change, Phil Easley announcing a WEMC station break.

In short, attend “The World is a Comedy” to see a fine effort by a dedicated cast and crew or to get a rare glimpse of Arabic culture. However, don’t expect to leave the theater with any genuinely new insights.

“The World is a Comedy” will be shown in Lehman Auditorium this weekend on Friday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m. and on Sunday at 2 p.m.

Rain Princess Worth the Money

By Rachel Bucher
Contributing Writer

Before listening to this CD, make a cup of your favorite coffee, wrap up in a warm blanket near a window, and be prepared to be told a story.

Gina Holsopple’s Rain Princess is full of things that make music come to life. The sound of the guitar sets the stage. Nothing fancy; just simple, true, and beautiful. Every so often the listener is surprised by the sounds of a harmonica or a stringed instrument added to the flowing lines, but it eventually comes back to the guitar and the clear voice. Holsopple’s voice complements the guitar completely.

Light, straight, and true are the first things I thought of when I heard her sing the first notes. The emotion that she feels when she sings these songs is evident, but never overdone. A criticism: sometimes the lyrics are lost to an overzealous guitar or the quiet ends of phrases. For me this is a shame because Holsopple’s lyrics are what kept me listening to this CD over and over again.

Holsopple’s lyrics complete the package. Without them she would just be another good amateur singer, but their simplicity and power blew me away. Of course there are the typical songs about loves lost and ballads to her savior. Yet, she is not afraid to sing about Maria, a young unwed mother with two children and a nonexistent boyfriend, or from what she knows, what she has experienced, and what brings her joy.

I really enjoyed spending time with this CD. I was told many stories and taught many lessons.

The ending lyrics from Holsopple’s song Rain Princess best sum up the message that I found running through this whole album: “...what I am is a little unpredictable and where I am going I know may be difficult, but there is joy and it’s seeping through the cracks, and there is laughter that can’t be held back.” If you love our own Ry Wilson, don’t miss Gina Holsopple’s Rain Princess.

To contact Gina or for order information, log on to her website at http://ginaholsopple.trispod.com.