A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum

Department of Theatre, Florida International University

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COMING IN MAY OF 2007
FIU College of Architecture + the Arts hosts
CHARLEE homes for children Girls Advocacy Project with
ROMULUS HUNT
a family opera by Carly Simon
Designs by Romero Britto
Directed by Phillip M. Church
Conducted by John Augustin
Costumes by Marina Pareja Lighting by Aronld Bueso
(All-professional cast and orchestra)
Wertheim Concert Hall
FOR INFORMATION CALL 305-348-3358

FROM THE DIRECTOR—Musical Theatre: the power of tradition

A recent news report announced record-breaking box office business in London's West End during 2006. Attendance topped 12 million, and box office receipts reached in excess of $786 million. Those statistics are all the more astonishing given the fact that less than six months earlier in July of 2005 London experienced one of the most savage acts of carnage in its recent history. Fifty-two commuters were killed in a skillfully orchestrated series of street bombings. While the number of victims pales in comparison to those killed in the attacks on the World Trade Center, the intended barbarity was equally horrific. It was truly a gruesome period for Londoners, severely impacting a tourist industry upon which the nation relies so heavily. However, an interesting phenomenon took place that has been credited with much of the resurgence of the theatricalting and the surprisingly swift return of a healthy tourist economy. Musical Theatre. To be precise, big-ticket musicals, including Dirty Dancing, Spamalot, Wicked and The Sound of Music, provided a psychological distraction that gradually encouraged a wave of confidence across a nation once held in the grip of intimidation and fear. Throughout history, musical theatre has, in some form or another, stepped in to revitalize the willpower of a nation facing defeat. During World War I and World War II music hall, vaudeville and burlesque offered audiences comedy, song and fantasy as antidotes against the fear of world domination. Terror is not germane to our particular age – it is ever present in various guises, and society recognizes the rationality of turning to comedy, not to escape reality but rather to celebrate an uplifting reaffirmation of life, hope and purpose universally conveyed through comedy and music. More and more the medical profession recognizes the effects of laughter as agents of psychological and physical wellbeing. That said, if enough people turned to laughter-as-remedy is it conceivable that we would no longer have a need for the drug and insurance companies? As Dave Barry might say, "Just kiddin'"? It is ironic that Pseudolus, in A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, fabricates a story of a great plague ravaging Crete in which everyone dying is seen lying about smiling. What a wonderful way to die! And so we turn to the quintessential musical comedy as an instructional tool for the young actor. But not just as entertainment for entertainment's sake. For the performer the rewards of comedy are spontaneous, and the actor is immediately put on notice when something does or does not work. An audience's response to tragedy is much harder to gauge. Responses are signaled through a more private and subjective silence. Jack Lemon was once quoted as saying that "comedy is a serious business." Comedy is about maintaining the truth of a higher, more inflected truth. A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum offers a complex distillation of Roman farce, (Plautus), commedia dell'arte, burlesque and vaudeville. Such performance genres are rarely seen today within their own settings. The "physical theatre" of Cirque du Soleil and the work of Bill Irwin come closest to maintaining these traditions. The vocal and physical demands upon the actor are time-honored techniques passed down from one generation to the next. They cannot be studied from historical textbooks. They cannot be conceived in the imagination alone. Such performance skills can only be learned through example and imitation. But regardless of the nature of the technique, the virtues of comedy and music offer us some of the greatest gifts to be shared with one another. From this perspective alone we are assured of surviving the most brutal of attacks on our consciousness. While not being paramedics, firefighters or first responders, the performer offers, through illusion, the healing powers of possibility. Society would be utterly rudderless and morally destitute if its culture were to collapse. Culture is our mirror into which we are compelled to look and laugh at our own image. Long live the tradition of musical theatre!

SPECIAL THANKS
- To the Stagecraft Class for all of their hard work on the set.
- The Tech Lab
- Rob Eastman-Mullins
- Fletcher McCune
- And, as always, to Marianna Murray for her constant vigilance of all things departmental.
A Funny Thing Happened On the Way to the Forum

Music and Lyrics by STEPHEN SONDHEIM
Book by LARRY GELBART & BURT SHEVELOVE
Directed by PHILLIP M. CHURCH
Scenic Designer CELSO PERUYERA Lighting Designer PHILIP WATSON
Costumer/Costume Designer MARINA PAREJA Technical Director GEORDAN GOTTLIEB
Choreographer PHILLIP EDIE Vocal Coach JOSÉ URBINO

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

SENEX, an old man............................................ MATTHEW C. MUR
DOMINA, his wife............................................. ASHLEY CAPO
HERO, his son, in love with Philia......................... RYAN RODRIGUEZ
HYSTERIUM, slave to Senex and Domina................... JUAN ESPINOSA
PSEUDOLUS, slave to Hero.................................. PAUL PEREZ
ERRONIUS, an old man....................................... B. J. DUNCAN
MILES GLORIOSUS, a warrior............................. CHRIS CROMER
LYCUS, a buyer and seller of courtesans................... RENIER J. MURILLO
TINTINABULA, a courtesan................................. AMY GONZALEZ
GYMNASIA, a courtesan..................................... MELISSA HUBICSAK
THE GEMINAE, courtesans................................. ASHLEY ALVAREZ, CARINITA QUINTERO
VIBRATA, a courtesan......................................... JADE GOODRIDGE
PANACEA, a courtesan........................................ NATALIE CEBALLOS
PHILIA, a virgin............................................... JENNIFER MARIE
PROTEANS...................................................... PEDRO MIR, MORGAN HOWLAND-COOK, RICK PEÑA

UNDERSTUDIES

PSEUDOLUS, HYSTERIUM, MILES GLORIOSUS........... JOSHUA DOBARGANES
GYMNASIA, PANACEA, THE GEMINAE..................... CHELSEA DURAN
TINTINABULA, VIBRATA, THE GEMINAE.................. MICHELLE FRAIOLI
SENEX, ERRONIUS............................................ PEDRO MIR
HERO, LYCUS.................................................. RICK PEÑA
DOMINA......................................................... JADE GOODRIDGE

The time is 200 years before the Christian era
The place is a street in Rome in front of the houses of Erronius, Senex and Lycus

There will be a ten-minute intermission.

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM is produced by special arrangement with MUSIC THEATRE INTERNATIONAL.
SUPPORT FIU THEATRE!

Earn the gratitude of the next generation of theatre artists!

Levels of Support

- **SEASON PRODUCER**  (Suggested Donation $10,000)
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For more information please contact Stephen Neal
Phone: 305-348-2895  Fax: 305-348-1803
E-mail: stephen.neal@fiu.edu

Mail To:
Stephen Neal
Business Manager
FIU Theatre PAC 135 B
University Park
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Next up: Two wonderful plays in rotating repertory!

**PROOF**
by David Auburn

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Directed by
Judy Bauerlein

April 6, 12, 14 @ 8 PM
April 8 @ 2 PM

**SILENCE**
by Moira Buffini

![Silence](image)

Directed by
Tracey Moore

April 5, 7, 13 @ 8 PM
April 15 @ 2 PM

**Sexy, Gothic Fairy Tale**

**Pulitzer Prize Winner**

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The Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival

**XXXVIII**

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This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to identify and promote quality in college-level theater production. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KCACTF representative, and selected students and faculty are invited to participate in KCACTF programs involving scholarships, internships, grants and awards for actors, playwrights, designers, stage managers and critics at both the regional and national levels.

Productions entered on the Participating level are eligible for inclusion at the KCACTF regional festival and can also be considered for invitation to the KCACTF national festival at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC in the spring of 2006.

Last year more than 1,400 productions were entered in the KCACTF involving more than 200,000 students nationwide. By entering this production, our theater department is sharing in the KCACTF goals to recognize, reward, and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theaters across the nation.