

# "King and I" Revisited

"The King and I", NCSA's first all school production opened last month to a total crowd of over 10,000 people, which speaks well of its audience appeal and overall execution. It was quite elegant, an extravaganza of scenery, costumes, and talent. Under the direction of William Dreyer the show comprised the efforts and budgets of all four departments. All of these artistic areas crowded together in Reynolds Auditorium for opening night to present in living color a royal pageant straight from the S of Broadway 1951.

Many of the principals were double-casted for both the evening and matinee performances. So in order to get a total picture this reviewer saw the opening and closing night performances and the matinee performances. Mona Hanes played the part of the strong willed English woman, Anna Leonowens for the evening show and Marilyn McIntyre for the morning performances. Miss Hanes was extremely pleasant as Anna, giving graceful movement with her substantially hooped dress. Her two best numbers were "Getting to Know You" and "Shall We Dance". These two numbers were delightful and fun to watch. Although I found Miss Hanes' voice pleasing, I lost many of the last words to her songs; this may be because the music is rather low for a soprano. She also relied too heavily on facial and exaggerated expressions to convey her character. Marilyn McIntyre may not have had quite the vocal quality, but her acting in the part of Anna was excellent. The elimination of "Hello, Young Lovers" from the matinee performance was a good idea because Miss McIntyre has difficulty holding notes for a long period of time. Despite this I was awed by her performance especially under the conditions of a loud and unruly (and I do mean unruly) high school audience. Her best moments were the "Shall I Tell You What I Think of You?" soliloquy, her scenes with the Krahahome, the King's letter scene, and the death scene.

For the evening and the matinee performances Chris Coan and Fred Serino played the part of the King respectively. Coan indeed has the stage presence of a king and the speaking voice to match, but I kept seeing Yul Brynner appear now and then. He very cleverly executed the comedy and gave the death scene the correct amount of tenderness for the salty-eyed outcome. He aided Miss Hanes in the "Shall We



Dance" number to make it one of the best scenes in the musical. Another fine moment is the scene in his chamber when he announces his (and Anna's) plans for the English visitors and finally relents and decides to give Anna her own "home sweet house." Coan's dialect caused last words and even one song, "A Puzzlement," to not be understood. I managed to see the show several nights and Coan's performances became constantly better. The last night he was very much the King of Siam.

Fred Serino handled the king's role in the matinee performances. He added a newly different insight into the character of the monarch, an interpretation that was both pleasing and refreshing.

One of the best things in the evening show was Deborah Gordon's Lady Thiang. Her song, "Something Wonderful" couldn't have been better—it was as if Rodgers and Hammerstein thought of the words just for her. She developed her character thoroughly, proving first rate in her voice and acting. Dianne Carriker played Lady Thiang for the day showings. She looked beautiful on stage and was a younger contrast to Miss Gordon's Lady Thiang. Her voice was very good but there were moments when I could not hear her—perhaps due to her head being humbly lowered most of the time. Michael Reeder did a marvelous job as the Prince Chulalongkorn. Steve Henderson was superb (as usual) as the Krahahome, combining ferocity and humor in the part of the King's right-hand man. The voice of Michael Williams in the part of Lun Tha has to be one of the finest male voices I have ever heard, and combined with the two girls as Tuptim, it provided the best vocal moments in the show. Marcia Epps as Tuptim for the evening show was very good and her voice was a good match to

Williams'. She looked beautiful throughout the show and it was easy to see why someone would risk their life for her. Marilyn Griffith was Tuptim for the matinee and like Miss Epps she, too, has a lovely voice.

It is important now that I comment on the dancing. It was excellent. Miss Nelle Fisher and Matteo both deserve applauding credit for superb choreography. The ballet was indeed the highspot of the entire show. It is difficult to pinpoint any one outstanding performance in the ballet, but Katie Straubel and Mel Tomlinson were particularly good as Eliza and King Simon.

The orchestra likewise deserves commendation. Led by Norman Johnson, it was composed of students from the school. For the most part, they were quite good, but I noticed a lack of excitement from the pit that occasionally appeared in the music.

Technically, the show was excellent. The amount of time (and lack of it) and equipment needed for a show of this nature is unbelievable. For this effort we thank our technical department for they certainly deserve the credit. The costumes were rented, so any criticism should go to the original designer (if he is still alive). The props (and there were many) were not rented but rather beautifully crafted by our Design and Production Department. When members of the cast constantly comment on the excellence of the props (especially on a Proscenium Stage), then you know they are good. I personally found the set (designed by guest designer John Doepp) of the King's Palace too lavish and too elaborate. It seemed to overpower the actors and their actions. It also seems too much like the first Broadway production of "The King and I," done some 21 years ago. However, the set with the boat in the first scene was

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