

Letter:

Student Image Defended

Dear Editor:

Since February 14, it has been my privilege to supervise the ticket sales of the coming "all-school production" of "The King And I." Today has been a red-letter day for us who have been manning the "King & I" box office out at the Arts Council Building. We have now passed the \$9,000 figure in ticket sales!

I have enjoyed the work for purely selfish reasons. It has enabled me to meet faculty wives I might otherwise never have gotten to know. The box office volunteer help - which has included members of the community as well as NCSA faculty wives - has been superb.

I am writing to the ESSAY for a very special reason. I think our NCSA students tend to feel almost paranoid about their "image" in this relatively small community. I hope that by relating the experiences of the box office staff for "The King And I" we can help dispel that feeling once and for all.

Please know that you are all appreciated and thought of with great pride by an overwhelming number of the community at large in this town! We have been literally overwhelmed and astonished by the number of ticket-buyers who take the time to say things like: "I know I will enjoy this production as I have every production I have seen this school do." "We are expecting a totally professional performance, you know!" And the typically Southern phrase "Why, I wouldn't have my family miss

this for the WORLD!" has been heard over and over.

From a father: "I used to make a special effort to take my kids to New York at least once a year, just so they could be exposed to something really professional in the arts. Since Winston-Salem has this Arts School, these expensive trips are no longer necessary." This particular man arrived without his checkbook and returned the following day to purchase his tickets; worried the whole time that we might sell-out in the interim.

Then there was the rather touching call from a senior citizen who was packing her things to move to a rest home and had just heard a radio interview with William Dreyer. She called while I was alone at the desk, with five or six customers in line, waiting with cash in hand to purchase tickets. She said, "I've just heard Mr. Dreyer talking about how his 'king' is going to shave his head. PLEASE tell him that when my nephew did this in Texas (my, this has brought back so many memories to me!) they were able to fix him up with a skull cap so that he looked just like 'Yuled Brinnert' - and my dear, he didn't have to cut a strand of hair. Please tell that attractive young man not to cut off all that WONDERFUL LONG HAIR! I really only called to say this, and that I am just heart-broken that I am too old and ill to attend one of your performances!"

Giving credit where it is due; there's no doubt that the suc-

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Editorial Review:

"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 Kralahome, 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 live 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 Doepf) 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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Record Review:

Leonard Bernstein's "Mass"

It is never easy to review a theatre piece on the basis of the music alone, and this is particularly so in the case of Leonard Bernstein's "Mass," which was apparently brilliantly staged and choreographed by some of the finest people in the American theatre. The music has the same characteristics as Bernstein's earlier music, with an additive of rock and roll. His musical parents are Stravinsky, Copland, Mahler, Shostakovich, and jazz. The handling of the orchestra is brilliant and far beyond being just surefire. Perhaps the other element of the work which is outstanding is the rhythm, which is a constant propelling force. Bernstein, unlike some of the more fashionable contemporary composers, does not "cop out" at the prospect of writing a singable and memorable melody. What he

comes up with is not always first-rate. On the other hand, it does always reflect his fine craftsmanship.

Unfortunately, the philosophic point of view of the text is a real "cop out." God is apparently wholly responsible for the messes which mortal men make. Those who are fundamentally irresponsible may find comfort in this as a religious attitude, but I personally cannot. In any case, the grand universal embrace and "Laude" which ends the "Mass" seems totally illogical, even if pleasant enough as a piece of music.

The performance and recording is excellent, and I would urge all to spend several hours in Mr. Bernstein's church, discovering their own reaction to this interesting work.

Robert Ward

Record Review:

"Patron Saint of Anguish" - Neil Young's Harvest

Neil Young is the patron saint of anguish. His songs ache with passion, compassion, and waning hope. The painful sensitivity of his lyrics and the urgent intensity of his music leave the listener exhausted and awed. The nameless longing that inspires him haunts his audience to the very depths of their emotional capacities; all are caught somewhere between the recognition of their own mortality and the achieving of its limited potential, with Young, a spiritual essence, hovering at the brink of release.

There is a strength here that defies categorization. The music is so intricate and so full that it envelops the listener in its power, its ravages of wrung emotion. It is built on a powerful bass undercurrent, evocative of a tribal war dance. Drummer Kenny Buttrey relies largely on relentless tom-toms and a forceful dirge-solemn bass drum, pounding with primitive urgency.

Tim Drummond strengthens this backbone bass line with unyielding yet unobtrusive bass guitar. Ben Keith on steel guitar and Jack Nitzsche on slide guitar maintain clear rhythms and controlled walls, firm, smoothly flowing melodic sketches. Neil Young's guitar puts out its characteristic moaning twang, interspersed with traditional chording and smooth strumming. Harmonica intermittently croons, wistful and resigned. John Harris' piano on the title song and Jack Nitzsche's eloquent keyboards on the rest of the album ease the heaviness of bass and drums with strong chording and treble flourishes, always consistent with the solemnity of mood of the music's intent. Vocal assistance on a couple of songs by James Taylor and Linda Ronstadt fills out the album to the limits of dramatic impact.

It's Young's own consistency of excellence that marks his genius.

As aloof as an Olympian god, he is at the same time as private and as vulnerable as any sensitive man aware of his mortality and his subservience to fate. He expresses the archetypal search, the agonizing search for the elusive, the precious, the unreachable. In "Heart of Gold", he establishes the core of his situation, of the entire album: that admittedly futile, yet nevertheless once enthusiastic, once hopeful, constant search, and finally, the certainty of the abandonment of that search. Incorporated is the uniquely Youngian motif "running dry," both metaphorically and actually. Always that hunted animal desperation, evidenced in a phrase like this one from "Are You Ready For The Country?": "I was talkin to the preacher-said God was on my side. Then I ran into the hangman - he said it's time to die." Or there comes a line like "I don't know who to trust any more", and you know

there can be no more grievous isolation. It's the quality of Young's voice, disciplined to a smoother, more poignant expressiveness, filled with gut-deep experience, supported by his solemn musical tendencies, that creates this mood of somber meditation, of intense and nearly exhausted emotion, sinking at times into bitter cynicism. No voice but Young's could convey the visceral immediacy of the songs.

"A Man Needs A Maid" by its title seems to imply a ballad of knights and maidens and gentle love. Not so. At first listen, it seems a joke: pounding piano, profuse orchestration by the London Symphony Orchestra, even chimes and a pealing church bell, belying lyrics that renounce the love relationship between a man and a woman for a dispassionate, merely functional one; a man needs a maid to clean his house and then stay out of his way. Despite its apparent

comedy, it becomes a very sad, very lonely song, not even necessarily cynical.

"The Needle and The Damage Done" eulogizes the junkie with compassionate reverence:

"I've seen the needle and the damage done

A little part of it in everyone
But every junkie's like a setting sun. . ."

And "Harvest" embodies all the pain-filled questioning, the exquisite tenderness of feeling and elusive metaphor that characterize Young's style.

Neil Young's penetrating talent, along with the meticulous musicianship of the band, pulls together a wholeness of sound, a purity of expression and a richness of effect that justifies the conception of it.

Tony Angevine