

Lincolnites neglect dinner theater



Jeff Englund and Robert Thurber, cast members of *Come Blow Your Horn* currently playing at the Lincoln Colonnades Dinner Theater. The dinner theater is experiencing some financial difficulty due to a lack of interest by Lincolnites.

The scene is from a drawing by cast member Gail Oliver.

This seems to be my week for griping. Not content with rattling the bones of the Stuart Theatre controversy, I find myself preparing to take my small audience to task once more. Therefore, I beg whatever indulgence is available.

Last fall, The Colonnades Dinner Theater opened with a sparkling production of Cole Porter's *Anything Goes*. Nicely mounted in a banquet room of the Cornhusker Hotel, the show earned its fair share of praise and Lincolnites were delighted with the novelty of at last having a dinner theater in their own back yard. Unfortunately, the show, hampered by erratic publicity, did not attract decent audiences and closed with a respectable debt.

No profit

The Colonnades' second production *Come Blow Your Horn*, opened in December to generally favorable reviews. However, in spite of improved publicity work, the show is still drawing barely enough audience to break even, much less to make a profit. According to Publicity Manager Robert C. Thurber, the production is attracting an average of 52 patrons per night, and has managed to fall slightly into debt as well.

This should not be.

More is at stake than the simple success or failure of the Colonnades Dinner Theater. What is in question here is whether or not Lincoln can, or will, support a theater that depends on box office receipts for its existence.

In its first two productions, the Colonnades has set a level of professionalism in its performances that is beyond that of the Lincoln

Community Playhouse. In addition, the dinner served with the show has been consistently decent and the service has been almost always beyond reproach. For \$7.95 per person (\$6.95 weeknights), the Colonnades offers what amounts to a remarkable entertainment bargain, one that should appeal to a wide variety of people.

Lincolnites wary

Yet, for some reason, Lincolnites seem to be wary of giving this uniquely enjoyable entertainment a try. If box office receipts do not improve for the next productions, it follows that the Colonnades will be forced to cut back or even possibly close down their operation, leaving the Lincoln theater audience somewhat poorer for its passing.

And that would be a poverty indeed.

This weekend holds plenty for Lincoln Audiences. At the Red Rose Lounge is the popular bluegrass-flavored group "Timberline", which boasts a lead singer who does one of the best John Denver takeoffs around.

Cattmann's Lounge has brought back Kirk Orr, an affable young man who plays guitar and sings very well. It has been a while since he's been in town, and a performer of his genuine likeability should always be welcomed.

The crowning joy of the weekend is the extended engagement at the Rendezvous Lounge, 56th and Cornhusker, of the Ramsey Lewis Trio. These men are some of the most polished pop-jazz musicians around, and the Rendezvous should get a good round of applause for bringing them to Lincoln.

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(A BAMBOO PRODUCTION.)