

# Pershing mayhem mars Marceau

By Michael Zangari

Up until the night of the Marcel Marceau performance, there was still a shade of cynical disbelief that the world's most respected living pantomimist actually would appear.

It had to be some type of cruel and teasing hoax; performers of Marceau's caliber are not easily drawn by a small town municipal auditorium, let alone one strategically located in the heart of Lincoln.

Lincoln currently does not have the drawing capacities or the facilities to host major talent. Beyond the obvious limitations, Lincoln also has the rather dubious distinction of having one of the worst possible reputations in the business as a place to perform. This has regressed to the point of Lincoln being synonymous with a professional's bad dream. Even Bob Dylan saw fit to walk off a Lincoln stage in the middle of his only local appearance.

As initially gratified as I was to find out that Marceau was in Lincoln, I found it embarrassing that conditions were such that Marceau could justly add to the flowering Lincoln legend.

### Conditions deplorable

Marceau performed to a less than capacity house under conditions that were deplorable in their decided lack of professionalism. More importantly, not only did Marceau have to put up with detracting problems, but audience members, paying as much as a healthy \$8 a ticket, were literally cheated out of the best show possible.

This is unforgivable.

Walking into Pershing Municipal Auditorium the night of the performance, you were immediately attacked by the newly painted walls. They are off-Burgundy and suffer from an abrasive dullness that makes an uncomfortable and crowded seating situation worse.

At show time, the lights were not dimmed, they were audibly clicked off all at once, throwing the Auditorium into total darkness and confusion simultaneously.

As ushers with flashlights frantically combed the area with light beams, people without prior warning were caught in the aisles, tripped over folding chairs and sprawled over others as they scrambled for their seats.

You had to remind yourself that you were there to see the mime of Marceau, not Bare-foot Billy and the Alabama Boogie Boys. During this mayhem, the curtain goes up.

It was easy to momentarily forget the problems as Pierre Verry, Marceau's title card bearer appeared in a striking pose followed by Marceau himself and his first mime. His stage presence alone was enough to erase initial problems.

### Floor not swept

You don't really follow Marceau's imagery, rather, you tend to flow with it. He creates props where there are none, he bends forms and shapes as he creates them and

it's easy to be mesmerized by the absolute magic he invokes.

The instant intimacy the man commands was rudely interrupted.

The stage lighting was improperly set, and haphazardly focused. As a result, Marceau often would enter areas of shadow and darkness interrupting the visual pacing of the piece. The improper lighting also created shadows that obscured and transformed many of his facial expressions into grotesque parodies of the intended images.

Further detracting from an excellent performance, the stage floor had not been swept and mopped properly. Marceau's movements occasionally sent up small clouds of dust. Pershing's stage is not that old and this could have been prevented even with standard preparation.

Marceau's performance was very good considering what he was up against. Technical imperfections kept it from being totally satisfying, and he failed to grant an encore.

Marceau is and was fantastic, and he was a needed breath of fresh air in Lincoln's entertainment doldrums. One can't help but wonder and anger at the needless infringements that continually contribute to keep Lincoln in those doldrums.

# Moffett monotypes will be displayed at Sheldon Gallery

Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery's exhibit for the month, monotypes by Ross Moffett, opens Tuesday.

Moffett was born on a farm in Iowa in 1888 and began his formal art study in Chicago in 1907. Moffett's personal style began to develop in 1916 while he worked in an art studio in Provincetown, Mass. He died in 1971.

In his autobiography, Moffett said of this time, "The thought came to me to try something radically different from the more or less studio work I had been doing up to that moment. So I began and hurriedly completed a small canvas from which I had discarded all drawing from actually present objects.

"Eliminated also were bright, high-keyed colors, and all representation of sunlight, with the consequent cutting up the picture with cast shadows. I invented and placed shapes instinctively, without premeditation. The result was a low-keyed canvas, produced largely by intuition."

Jon Nelson, assistant director of university art galleries, said Moffett's exhibit will run until April 4.

# arts & entertainment



Courtesy of Worcester Art Museum

Self-Portrait, 1915 by Ross Moffett. Moffett, born on an Iowa farm, was an important figure in the development of modernism in American Art.

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