



Daily Nebraskan photo
Con-artist Prof. Harold Hill, played by Chip Smith, gives a nudge to Marian Paroo, performed by Sharon Runyan, in the Lincoln Community Playhouse's production of *The Music Man*, opening tonight.

out of my head | Playhouse to close season with revival of 'Music Man'

By Robert Thurber

The fictional town of River City, Iowa, will never be the same. Not after the treatment it receives in the Lincoln Community Playhouse's production of *The Music Man* opening tonight.

The revival of this celebrated 20-year-old musical closes the playhouse's 36th season with performances Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays through May 23rd.

In its day, *The Music Man* was considered a fresh and entertaining musical comedy. That, however, was in the 1950s. Today it seems like an anachronism, an example of a long-gone theater era.

The musical has stayed alive on the stage because of its neatly designed tale, playing on emotions solely for enjoyment.

From the opening overture blast at last Friday's benefit performance, this John Wilson-directed production was a joy. Not only by the audience, which almost sang along with the melodies, but also by the fifty-member company, who reveled in the old-fashioned frivolity.

Happily ever... of course

The plot is familiar: con-artist Prof. Harold Hill tries to sell a boys' band to a stubborn Iowa town. But he gets tangled in his emotions and winds up as the victim... happily ever after, of course.

The playhouse's presentation of this time-weathered tale is high-spirited and tongue in cheek, from Dan

Yanik's cartoon-like set design to the terribly off-key barbershop quartet.

The musical's action flows quickly, except for the traffic problems of moving 50 actors on and off stage.

Ron Rusthoven, former UNL crew coach, and Chip Smith, UNL senior music major from McCook, play Hill's role on alternate nights. Rusthoven, whom I saw, has stage presence, but little voice to back it up. His characterization of the fast-talking salesman lacked depth and feeling.

Spectacle of it all

But Sharon Runyan, of Lincoln, who plays Marian Paroo, has charm that comes through in her singing and acting.

Jill Eiche, a UNL graduate who plays Eulalie Mackecknie Shinn, is a talented comedic actress and singer, whose abilities are suited to the loud, obnoxious Eulalie. Don O'Neill, as Mayor Shinn, gives one of the play's strongest performances.

Those who flock to musicals for the spectacle of it all, will not be disappointed.

The costumes by Trish Place are as humorously and lavishly designed as anything done at the playhouse this year.

Karen McWilliams' choreography, although too stiff and predictable, can be enjoyed for its precise movement. Although Yanik's set is not the River City that Robert Preston would recognize, its caricature fits into the production's concept.

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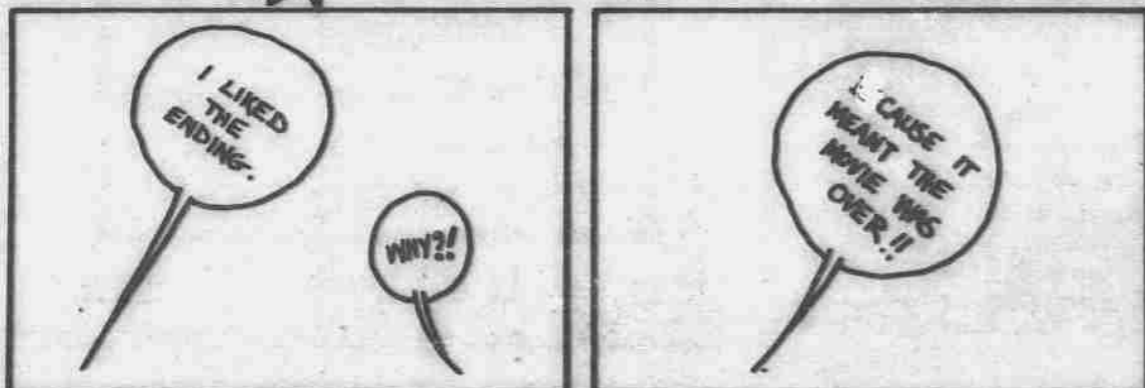
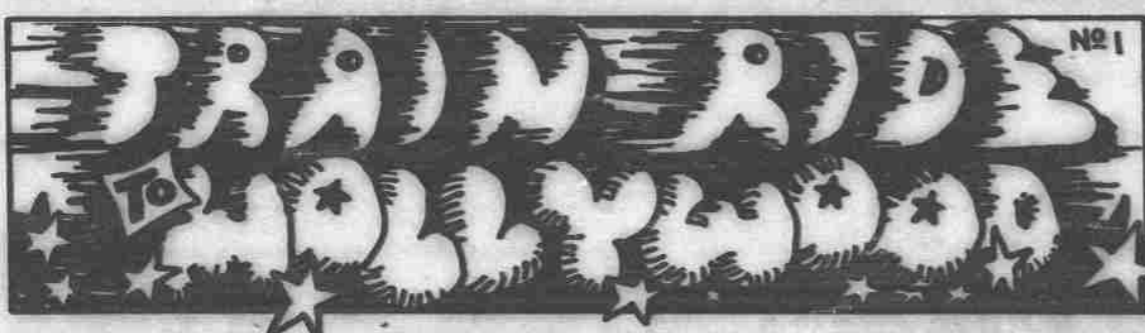


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