

'Albert Herring' opens tonight

By Marella Synovec

Albert Herring, a contemporary comic opera by Benjamin Britten, opens Thursday at Kimball Recital Hall, 12th and R streets.

The production is sponsored by the UNL School of Music Opera Theater and UNL Summer Sessions. Roger Stephens is the director and musical director is Richard Grace.

The setting is Loxford, England. The time is 1900. The townspeople, who annually elect a virtuous maiden as May Queen, have a difficult task before them for there are no virtuous maidens. The town elders, struck with the idea of a May King, unanimously acclaim Albert Herring the May King.

Albert, son of a greengrocer, is untainted and unaware of worldly ways. Happy with the honor at first, Albert soon realizes he has been sheltered from the world's realities.

Town mourns

Albert decides to go on an all-night binge. The town fears the worst and goes into mourning. But Albert returns, slightly ruffled and much bolder, to face an inquisition by the irate citizens. The youngsters praise Albert's awakening as the elders stalk out.

Albert Herring is a difficult work because it is contemporary," Stephens said. "It is a total work because the musical dialogue is conversational and there is continuous action on the stage."

Stephens said Britten's works show a "feel for the stage" by relating action and music.

"I think the hardest part of an opera is to set the mood through exposition in the first act," Stephens said. "The first scene of *Albert Herring* does it well. It is a total theatrical piece. The only thing missing is dance."

Stephens said operas are much more rewarding than

musicals. They also are more difficult, he said, because the singers must pace their voices to perform for two and one-half hours.

Shows educational, entertaining

The School of Music presents an opera each summer, and two during the academic year, Stephens said. The shows are designed to serve as educational vehicles for singers, as well as audience entertainment, he said.

The operas also are selected on the basis of the people available to play the roles, he said. *Albert Herring* has a cast of 13, Stephens said. Last summer's opera, *Carwen*, included a chorus of more than 40 singers.

Production is ahead of schedule, Stephens said, because there is only a single cast and no chorus. During the school year two casts usually are selected for a production, he said.

Albert Herring is the project of students enrolled in a two-credit-hour opera workshop offered during the pre-session and first five-week session of summer school, Stephens explained.

Cast members and a 13-piece orchestra spent from May 10 to June 5 learning the score, Stephens said. Rehearsals have been staged since June 5 and dress rehearsals were this week, he said.

Costs are \$10,000

Cost for a production averages \$10,000, Stephens said, which includes royalties, salaries for technical crews, and materials.

The cast of *Albert Herring*: Patti Moran (Lady Billows), Kathy Ganz (Florence Pike), Alida Norskov (Miss Wordsworth), Scott Root (Mr. Gedge), Pete Schroeder (Mr. T'pford), Vaughn Fritts (Superintendent Budd), Brad Kroeker (Sid), Richard Drews (Albert Herring), Colleen Schlake (Nancy), Patti Harney (Mrs. Herring), Beth Kerl (Emmie), Devonye Lonsdale (Cis) and David Boles (Harry).

Set designer is Don Yanik. Lighting is directed by Tim Place, and costumes are from Malabar, LTD, of Toronto.

Albert Herring performances are July 8 and 10 at 8 p.m. and July 11 at 3 p.m.



Albert Herring
(Richard Drews)
surprises mother
(Patti Harney) with
new-found boldness.

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