

Definition of Wahalia group is left to imagination

Review By Douglas R. Weil

What's a "wahalia"? Looking through a dictionary I found "wagonlit" (a railroad sleeping car) and "wail" (a forsaken, orphaned child), but there was no listing for a "wahalia".

Whatever wahalia means to Webster or Funk and Wagnalls it means comedy and music when referring to the Ogden Edsl Wahalia Blues Ensemble Mondo Bizzario Band.

Numbering up to ten members in the past, Ogden Edsl is now a trio consisting of Bill Carrey, Bill Frenzer and Otis "12". The band appeared Friday night during the Winter Walpurgisnacht in the Nebraska Union. Ogden Edsl has just returned from Los Angeles where they recorded their first album, *Stuffed*, at The Record Plant.

Otis "12", also known as Otis Omaha and Doug Wesselmann, describes the trio's act as "a variety show—a kind of rock vaudeville." The act is different from most comedy teams because Ogden Edsl uses music and verbal routines to present a slanted way of looking at topics.

One example is the top 40 sounding "Dead Puppies (Aren't Much Fun)". Sung by Carey, "Dead Puppies" is a 1970's version of that grade school back-of-the-bus favorite, "Dead Dog Rover". Typical of the band's musical satire, "Dead Puppies" was one of the crowd's favorite routines.

"'Dead Puppies' is on the album," Otis said, "but it is a much different production using a pipe organ with a 16-foot tall bass pipe. It's the same organ that they use to record the Hanna-Barbara cartoons."

Otis thought about it and chuckled, "Most stereos won't even play the final note, it's so low."

Otis was right. As I listened to the record at home and "Dead Puppies" ended, the 16-foot bass pipe hit the loudspeakers with the impact of a brick dropping into a bowl of cornflakes. The woofers seemed to unscrew from the cabinet begging me to call a priest.

Not only does Ogden Edsl grab you with humor, they have a stranglehold on the fate of your stereo system.

Otis, originally from Kansas City, (the other members of the group are from Omaha) said the group went to Los Angeles and recorded *Stuffed* at their own expense.

Stuffed is being distributed in different areas of the country by the band. By telephoning record stores and radio stations, Ogden Edsl hopes to attract the attention of a record company interested in signing the band to a contract.

"We're trying desperately to sell the album to some record label," Otis said. We'd like to make a big killing so we could live high off the hog for two months."

One of the trio's better satirical pieces is the inevi-

table gameshow of the future, "Russian Roulette Give-away", where the announcer tells contestants to "blow their brains out for meaningless prizes." Of course, the bigger the risk the bigger the prize.

Otis said Walpurgisnacht was probably the band's last performance as a trio.

Otis said the group was much larger but two years ago it's size was cut down as an economy move. Now, after completing the album and anticipating good record

sales, the group is expanding to include some of the original players.

Apparently Ogden Edsl will be around for some time as the source of their creativity is unknown.

"There is a doctor in Omaha looking into organic causes," Otis said. "We go into the lab once a week and he pays us fifty dollars and he checks our cranial pressure levels. It's still incurable."

arts and entertainment



Opera should be good time, not 'wretched result'

By Charlie Krig

In the *Harvard Dictionary of Music*, Saint Evremond called it "a bizarre affair made up of poetry and music, in which the poet and the musician, each equally obstructed by the other, give themselves no end of trouble to produce a wretched result."

Richard Grace, UNL School of Music professor had another view of it. "If we can get an audience there it'll help a lot because a cast will respond to an audience. If there's a full house, they go out there and they're turned on."

Both are discussing the opera at Kimball Recital Hall this weekend. Grace is music director and orchestra conductor for the UNL Opera Dept.'s two one-act operas opening Thursday night. They are *Il Campanello* (The Interrupted Wedding Night) by Donizetti and *Il Trabarro* (The Cloak and Dagger) by Puccini.

Their difference is based on the fact that many people still believe opera is only for the elite or upper class.

Larry Lusk, UNL music professor said this idea began in the 16th century when only royalty and their affluent friends were invited to attend operas.

Something for everyone

Assistant Professor of Voice Roger Stephens is director for the two plays and he agrees that opera has something in it for everybody.

The short length of the pieces was only one reason Stephens said he made his choices. The operas also contrast each other for several reasons.

Il Campanello is the humorous story of an elderly apothecary, Don Annibale, who marries young and pretty Serafina. However, a casanova named Enrico tries to prevent the consummation of the marriage because he loves Serafina. The opera's plot is based on his tricks to keep the newly-weds apart.

The darker side of love is shown in the other piece, *Il Trabarro*. The plot revolves around a middle-aged barge owner Michele, his wife Giorgetta, (who is half his age),

and a workman on the barge Luigi, Giorgetta's lover. Michele learns of his wife's infidelity and the drama leads to his revenge.

All three professors admitted opera's structure sometimes makes it hard to accept the art's conventions, and agreed that approaching opera with an open mind makes it easier to enjoy its beauty.

Part of its force comes from the combination of many elements.

"It's music, drama, sets, lights, costumes, orchestra, chorus, lighting, and soloists," Lusk said. "That's one of the things that makes opera a unique form. And anytime you start combining things you start making concessions."

Funny things

But Lusk added what he thinks is the key to enjoying opera the first time you see it. "Opera is something we have to be prepared for . . . when we read the comics we admit there's no such thing as a Donald Duck . . . but right from the bat we admit there are funny things going on here and we go on ahead and enjoy it for what it is."

Stephens acknowledged that some elements could overcome the others. He noted the public's interest in lavish productions by saying, "People want it (opera) to be more of a spectacle like it used to be and that's too bad."

Another custom with which the instructors disagreed is having to do the work in its native language. Grace said the United States is "the only country in the world with this high-brow idea about language . . . *Carmen* was written in French, but when they do it in Italy, you bet they do it in Italian."

Translations make Grace's work easier in another way.

He cues the 26-piece orchestra plus the singers from a score book that measures 18 inches long, 17 inches wide and a half inch thick. Each page has no more than three-measures of music making it "very demanding" and a lot of work. You look at a score that boggles the mind."

Thinking English

Unfortunately, his music for *Il Trabarro* isn't trans-

lated. "This is rented so it's in Italian, but I have to make sure I'm thinking in English," he said. "I have to look at that page and cue the whole thing." As a result, Grace said he doesn't get nervous at the start of a performance. Instead, he gets fluttery when he knows that a difficult section of music with many tempo changes is coming up.

So what do the two directors, Stephens and Grace, expect on opening night? The cast has been practicing since last semester's opera (*The Number Of Fools*) closed in October, except during Thanksgiving and Christmas breaks. Stephens thinks his cast is ready for the public.

But they are more concerned that the audience will have a good time when they see the shows. "Some of these operas are so corny and low-brow as they can be. People see comics of large women with a shield and a helmet with horns and they think that's what it's going to be," Grace said. "But," he said, "if we can get them there, they're going to like it."

Performances will be at 8 p.m. Thursday through Saturday and at 3 p.m. Sunday. All seats are reserved at \$3 for adults and \$2.50 for students and those 65 years and older.

up & coming

Sheldon Art Gallery Continuing Exhibits:

Faculty Exhibition.
Photographs by Robert Adams
Plants and Planters (Art Shop)
Lithographs by Richard Hunt.

Film and TV

Foreign Classics: *The Conformist*, 7 and 9 p.m. Monday.

Foreign Classics: *Jonah, Who Will Be 25 in the Year 2000*, 7 and 9 p.m. Tuesday-Friday.

Sheldon Film Theatre: Film on the Arts, 3 p.m. Thursday.

Kimball Recital Hall

Winter Opera, *Il Campanello* and *Il Trabarro*, 8 p.m., Thursday and Friday.

Union Program Council

Record Lending Library opens Monday, Union room 122.

Tracy-Hepburn films-Union Centennial room, 7 p.m., admission \$2 (includes free popcorn).

Tracy-Hepburn films part two-Centennial room, 7 p.m., admission \$2 (includes free popcorn).

Lincoln Community Playhouse

The Me Knowbody Knows, 8 p.m. Friday.

