

# arts / entertainment

## Italian route to happiness plotted by updated classic

By Betsie Ammons

Surprises, deceptions, plot complications, slapstick and any other form of comedy imaginable combine to make *Scapino*, the latest offering by the UNL Theatre Department, an absolute joy to watch.

Set in modern day Naples, the play is by far the best way to get acquainted with the classics. Loosely based on a Moliere play, *Rascalities of Scapin*, Frank Dunlop and Jim Dale's *Scapino* updates the language, humor and actions of Moliere's time to give an age-old story '70s dress.

The play concerns Scapino, the town's resident problem-solver, an irrepressible young man who delights in complicating lives. He puts his talents to use helping two of the town's eligible men marry the girls of their dreams.

The road to marriage is blocked by the men's fathers, who wish them to marry girls they deem more suitable. Although the route to happiness is detoured by surprises, and the ending is indeed a shock, nothing is revealed by saying that everyone ends up happy. And happiness is the essence of this light-hearted, high spirited play.

reputed to be the town's most stingy, mean resident. Stone's Geronte was mean enough to be threatening and naive enough to be funny.

### Clumsy counterpart

Robert Ball as Scapino's sidekick Sylvestro was a perfect counterpart to Thew. Sylvestro has less class and is far more clumsy than Scapino. Ball stood out in a scene where he pretended to be a chain-wielding hood.

The other main characters were fine for their parts. Larry Petersen portrayed Ottavio, son of Argante, and Amy Mills played his love interest Giacinta. Thomas Bothwell played Leandro, Geronte's son, with Caron Buinis as Zerbietta, the gypsy he loves.

Although it seems their parts were written to complement Scapino, some scenes did highlight their comedy talents.

One such scene was between Ottavio and Leandro. In a chase with Scapino, they were required to improvise running through the town and swimming.

Although I won't reveal how they handle swimming on stage, I will say that it provided one of the show's funnier moments.

*Scapino's* technical aspects also shine. The sound is particularly impressive, with an old-fashioned juke box emitting sound akin to Dolby. The choice of songs was fitting for an Italian village. Sound designer was Bill Honvlez.

### Vibrant set

Paul Whaley's set combined use of color with innovative building to convey an European flair. The set colors, combined with Michael Bautista's lighting, were vibrant and left the audience with a carnival

feeling.

The set also was versatile, providing the players with several scenes—a wharf, cafe and ocean were included.

Director Hal Floyd made full use of the set by placing actors in every area. He also conveyed the spaciousness of Naples by having the characters enter through the aisle throughout the play.

Patricia Dennis' costumes finished the light, happy atmosphere with their lively colors and wide rounded lines.

The playwrights have said that *Scapino* is "a long way off from Moliere." Anyone who sees it will concur, but even the most fervent Moliere follower would have trouble not having fun at *Scapino*.

*Scapino* runs tonight, Friday and Saturday with performances at 8 p.m. in the Howell Theatre.

## theatre review

### Tailored role

The show belongs to Scapino, and the part seems to be made for sophomore John Thew. Thew was likeable and magnetic as Scapino and his comedy timing kept the show moving at a lively pace.

Movement makes up a great deal of the comedy of *Scapino*. Thew's actions were perfectly exaggerated, as were those of the entire cast. Especially nice were scenes in which he swings across stage on a rope to elude some irate victims of his deception.

Another standout was Myron C. Papich as Carlo, the bum. His scene in which he and Scapino deceive Geronte, one of the fathers, shows his talent for mimicking different forms of comedy and characters.

The wealthy, demanding fathers were excellently portrayed by Jim Anderson and Phil Stone, respectively.

Anderson was sufficiently excitable as Argante, although at times he talked so fast that it was difficult to understand his dialog.

Stone was believable as Geronte,

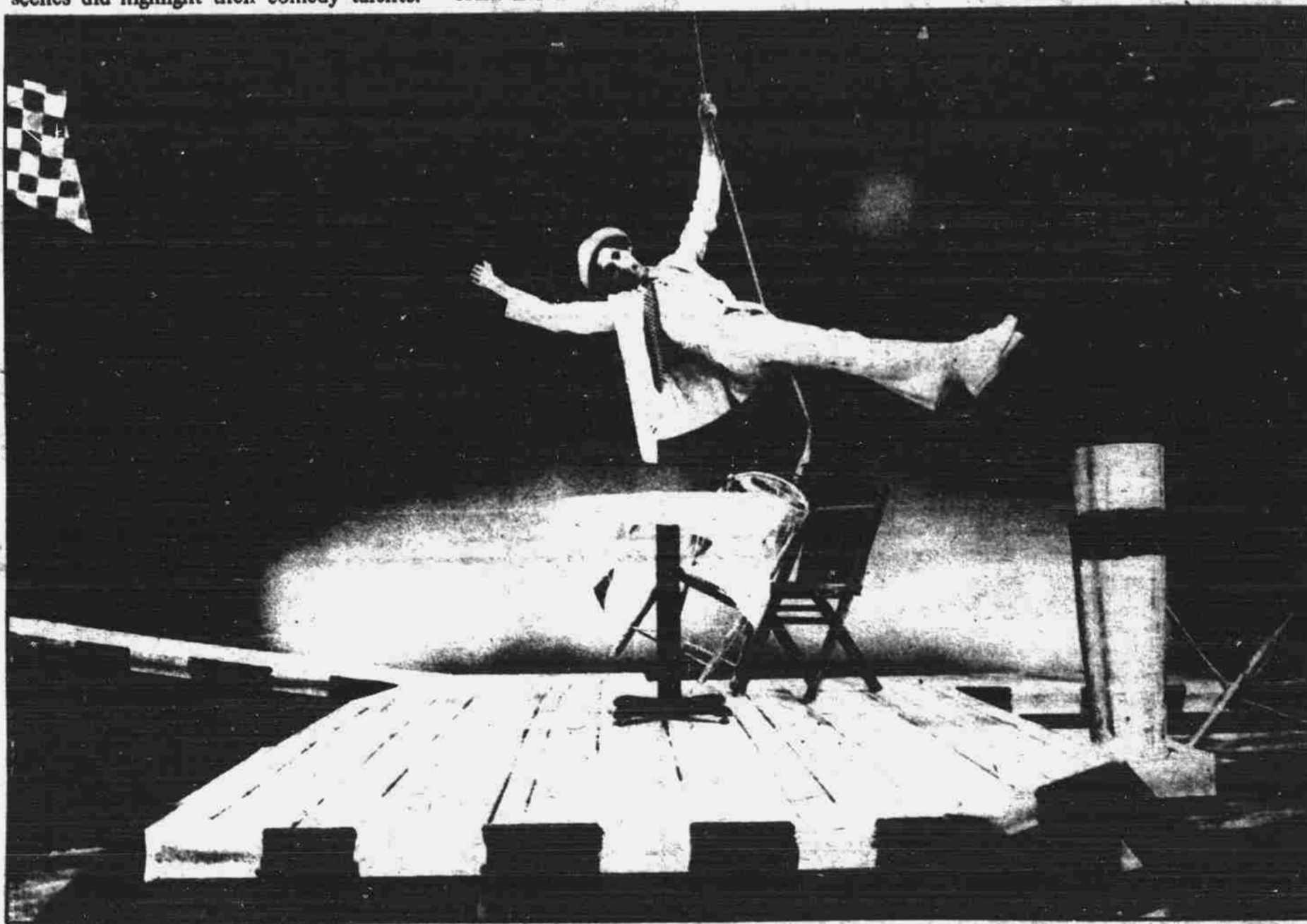


Photo by Jerry McBride

John Thew enters an Italian cafe a la Tarzan in a scene from *Scapino* playing at the Howell Theatre.

## Omaha columnist paid to live in world of entertainment

By Kent Warneke

It's straight from a Hollywood script.

This girl talked to her friend who talked to her brother who lives below the celebrity, whereupon the brother talked the celebrity into being interviewed.

It's straight from a Hollywood script, but the scene takes place in Omaha, with the *Omaha World Herald's* entertainment columnist Peter Citron.

Some people may not see Peter Citron as a celebrity, but after talking to him, one gets the feeling that if he isn't, he should be.

"There's a part of me that's a ham and loves to perform," Citron said. "There are some things I enjoy doing, in particular banquets, because you know people are there ready to listen to you."

"And then there are things which I really don't like such as the second show in a night club act where everyone there is pretty well gone," Citron said. "But it's still kind of fun to figure out audiences like that and how to make them respond."

### Entertaining benefits

"Entertaining has given me a lot of things, like presence and poise in front of an audience that I don't have naturally," he said. "But then I will do almost anything for entertainment. Ten years ago I would have done anything."

Citron was born in New York, and after

attending Dartmouth College off and on for three years, he experienced a wide variety of lifestyles before settling in Omaha.

"I wrote obituaries; I was a janitor; I worked for a small weekly newspaper; I ran a small weekly newspaper and I even started by own small weekly newspaper," Citron said. "But then I ran out of money, so I decided to come to Omaha."

And so, since 1966, Citron has been an entertainment writer, a role that has changed considerably since his first years on the *Omaha World Herald* staff.

"My work has changed quite a bit, but it also has expanded. For instance we didn't have movie reviews in the beginning," he explained.

### Paid to enjoy

"I've always been an entertainer and a writer and now I'm getting paid to do things I enjoy," Citron said. "There a definite creative aspect to my writing and also a great deal of reporting."

Being an entertainment writer has advantages, because not everyone can call Bob Hope and get to speak with him, he said.

"I can pick up a phone and talk to him without any of the usual red tape. He is a super nice guy," Citron said. "One time I wanted to interview him on a putt-putt golf course and he agreed right away."

"Johnny Carson and Dick Cavett are also very gracious to me. They know that

we're all fellow Nebraskans," he explained.

"Most people in the entertainment business are prepared to be gracious when they know they're going to be interviewed," Citron said. "But there's always the exceptions to the rule."

### Rude interviews

"I was supposed to view Jill Clayburgh's *An Unmarried Woman* and then interview her the next morning. But I wasn't able to see it when scheduled and so when I told her that she promptly got up and left before the interview even started, even though I had read up and was more than able to do a professional interview," he said. "It didn't leave what you could call a favorable impression."

A good portion of Citron's writing is reviewing movies, restaurants and television programs.

"I'm what you could call a consumer reviewer in that I'm very conscious of people and I have to describe and tell the things that they should know," Citron said.

"Every area that I review is different, but you have to remember that for every person their mood will affect whatever they are doing, so I try to leave any influences I have at the door," he said.

### Realize differences

"With restaurants, you should sample what they do best," Citron explained. "Don't go into a steak house and expect to find superior Chinese food and you also

have to remember that with every different waiter or waitress your whole evening could take on an entirely different look."

According to Citron, he includes the good points in movies and television programs and what type of viewer would enjoy the production.

"I'm not like Gene Shalit who will say a certain movie is the pits, I'll look for the good points and try to see what it has to offer to viewers."

Citron has been in Omaha for 13 years and does not plan to leave.

### Satisfied

"I'm pretty much satisfied with Omaha. I've sort of got a goal to stay here and now that my mini-profiles of celebrities for television has been syndicated, things are going pretty well."

"I do plenty of traveling, about one week out of every month and I get to New York often enough to see six to 12 Broadway shows a year," Citron said. "The only thing is that my traveling is not at the pace I'd like it to be, it seems that I'm always racing to catch a plane and then when I arrive all I have time for is to do my work and then come on home."

Citron's profession and personal life are both very hectic and time-consuming.

"My work is not easily described, it's very complicated," he said. "My life and work are the same, they can't be separated, but I'm very satisfied with what I do."