

arts/entertainment

'Storyteller' Chapin weaves old with new album cuts

By Betsie Ammons

An enthusiastic Lincoln audience Sunday was introduced to some new friends and reacquainted with some old ones through the story-telling songs of singer Harry Chapin and his band.

Dressed in a loose white shirt and casual tan slacks, Chapin enchanted the small, but dedicated, crowd of 2,100 for close to three hours, mingling old favorites with cuts from a new double album released last week.

Chapin, dubbed by some as the "master storyteller," has the ability to make audiences feel as if they know the characters he sings about.

That probably is because everyone knows at least one person like the losers in life and love of whom Chapin sings.

Chapin started the concert with material from his new album, *Legends of the Lost and Found*, after promising the crowd he would play all the old songs because "I spent too many years playing for audiences who didn't want to hear a damn thing."

CHAPIN AND THE BAND kept a running repartee through the concert, begun by his telling the crowd it was "nice to have an audience you'd like to know anyway." Chapin took a lot of good-natured ribbing from both the band and the crowd, a tradition at all Chapin concerts.

The new material finds Chapin with more involved musical arrangements and vocals. The individual talents of lead guitarist Doug Walker, guitarist-vocalist John Wallace, cellist Kim Scholes, drummer Howie Fields and Harry's brother Steve, pianist and group arranger, were highlighted more than in past concerts.

But, as usual, the audience came to hear the old Chapin standards, from "Taxi," to "Cats in the Cradle" to "Mr. Tanner," and on and on.

The old songs took on new shape, however, with different instrumentals and tighter rhythms. Chapin told the crowd the band rerecorded some of the early hits on the double album because he feels they do them better now than in the beginning. And he is right.

In the song explanations which have become a Chapin trademark, he told the crowd of some of his upcoming projects.

"Pretzel Man," which breaks out of the old routine Chapin harmonies with a clever melody and instrumentation, will be featured in a songbook illustrated with paintings by Chapin's grandfather.

ANOTHER NEW SONG, "Old Folkie," is a moving tribute to folksinger Pete Seeger, a near-legend at the age of 60.

Tributes, philosophy, commentary—all are inherent to Chapin's music and may explain his popularity. He is a man of strong convictions, and is anything but shy about letting people know what he thinks.

Anyone who attends a Chapin concert is subject to his political views, and Sunday night proved no exception. He spoke of his pet project "World Hunger Year," to which he gives the profits from over 50 percent of his concerts.

He also urged the crowd to take part in political activity, saying the long-range problems of the world are not up to political leaders but rather in the hands of the common people.

Although he did not favor any specific candidate, he said the 1980 election was

important because it marks the end of the 70s, or the "me decade", and a new political beginning.

He also commented on the nation's education system in two songs "So Many Colors" and "Little Girls."

Chapin includes Lincoln in most of his tours and it is apparent that he appreciates the audience as much as the people enjoy him.

During the encore, he thanked the crowd through song, saying that without

them, he would be nothing. Although that sounds like slick, insincere showmanship, Chapin's low key delivery and rapport with the crowd leaves one feeling as though he means it.

One last surprise for Chapin fans—he introduced the lyrics to a sequel to "Taxi", the song which propelled him from obscurity to popularity. Speaking rather than singing he told the audience it would be featured on an upcoming studio album.

Well, Harry, we're looking forward to it.



Photo by M. Billingsley

The master storyteller, Harry Chapin performed for a small but enthusiastic crowd in Lincoln's Pershing Auditorium Sunday night.

Auditions dropped in Magic Theatre's no-star system

By Michael Wiest

Those familiar with Hermann Hesse's novel *Steppenwolf* will remember Pablo's Magic Theatre, the elusive, bizarre, frightening and beautiful labyrinth of experience which leads Harry Haller to a truer understanding of life and the many facets of his personality. Perhaps the main difference in purpose and function between this fictional theater and its real-life namesake, The Omaha Magic Theatre, is accessibility.

Described in one of its bi-annual newsletters as a "collection of actors and directors, writers, visual artists, filmmakers and technicians all dedicated to the process of theatre," the Magic Theatre offers the artist a unique opportunity to train and develop in the company of a nationally known theatre group, without the competitive barrier of an audition.

"There is no star system," said Jo Ann Schmidman,

director, actress and dancer with the company. Schmidman said that instead there is a six-month apprenticeship in which the developing actor may have daily contact with production and theater workshops. After six months, the actor may contribute whatever is possible. Anyone who puts in the time and effort will have a hand in production, regardless of appearance, style or physical handicaps.

Running Gag, written by Schmidman, will be performed by the Magic Theatre at the 1980 Winter Olympics at Lake Placid. The Magic Theatre was one of five performing arts groups invited to perform at the Olympics.

SCHMIDMAN IS well known for her series of warm-up exercises designed to prepare the actor both mentally and physically for performance, developed while she toured with the world famous Open Theatre.

According to Schmidman, the Magic Theatre is in need of donations to meet expenses for the upcoming performance at the Olympics. Purchases to be made include materials for soft sculpture props, described by Schmidman as "beautiful as well as portable," light equipment, and set pieces to rebuild their portable platform. All donations are tax deductible.

The theatre, located at 1417 Farnam St., and now in its 10th year of production, is a non-profit, educational foundation supported by grants and private donations. All productions are musicals. Often a play begins simply with an idea or topic, and then script and production are developed simultaneously. This is the case with the Theatre's newest production, *Goona Goona*.

The theme of *Goona Goona* is families in conflict. In way of research, members of the company attended family abuse workshops.

"This is a timely topic," Schmidman said, adding that conflict within families leads to a perhaps less recognized, more subtle form of abuse and manipulation, often manifesting itself in psychological forms as well as physical.

Judging from a few minutes rehearsal of this play, scheduled to premier November 2 at the Magic Theatre, the subject of abuse within the family will receive an outlandish, comic, and thought-provoking treatment in the absurdist style characteristic of the avant garde Magic Theatre.

RECENT PRODUCTIONS have dealt with equally pertinent topics, ranging from the inhumanity of the prison system in *Babes in the Bighouse* to the implications of the current jogging mania in *Running Gag*. Raucous humor and zany musical numbers are always earmarks of the theatre's plays, despite the gravity of their subjects.

Most of the plays are written by Megan Terry, playwright in residence at the Magic Theatre. Terry has a long and impressive list of credentials, including a 1978 Guggenheim Fellowship, a 1970 Obie Award for best play and more than 45 plays in print. She is a founding member of the New York Theatre Strategy and the Women's Theatre Council. Currently, Terry is adjunct Professor of Theater at UNO, and has been compared by critics to O'Neill, O'Casey, D.H. Lawrence and Lorca.

One of her plays produced at the Magic Theatre, *American Kings English for Queens*, has been sold to more than 200 theatre groups across the country, and is being produced in the Scandinavian countries and Poland as well. The play deals with nature of our language, asking the question: "Do we talk like we think, or think like we talk?" It explores sexism in our speech, yet goes on to expound Terry's philosophy on the possibilities of the humanist experience.

A speedy trip ends in a huge loss

By Cindy Coglianes

There are problems with taking one tank tours if you have a lead foot.

This reporter can speak accurately and knowledgeably from experience. She is going to lose her driver's license.

one-tank tours

It all began in 1976 with a speeding ticket and it was to become a way of life.

Last Tuesday night, inattentively speeding eastward on U.S. 6, I noted a State Patrol car pass me and then make a sudden U-turn from the westward lane. I knew right away he was not going to stop me for a chat; this guy meant business.

Sure enough, those red lights pierced the quiet country dark. I pulled off the road in Mom's yellow Volkswagen and he pulled up behind me.

"You know why I am stopping you?" the officer of the law asked.

"No, why?" I asked with complete sincerity, hoping that it might not be because I was speeding. Like maybe he's going to tell me that my right tail light is out or something.

But no.

"CAN I SEE your driver's license please?" he asked. "I clocked you at 74 m.p.h. in a 55 m.p.h. zone," he said, looking at my driver's license. "Again, Cynthia."

I thought he looked familiar. Yes, we had met earlier—sometime in July. I began to remember the sordid details of our last encounter.

That time he caught me going westward near Waverly on Interstate 80. That time I was clipping along at 74 m.p.h. And that time I was in Mom's yellow Bug again and the ordeal cost me \$45.

But this time, boy, no mercy for me.

"Why don't you come back to my car," the officer invited.

I could think of about a million reasons not to go back to his car, but this guy was clearly in no mood for jokes tonight.

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