

'Charley's Aunt' — cool comedy relief

By John Lechner
Theater Critic

Nothing goes better with a hot summer night than a cool evening of comedy and that's exactly what the Nebraska Repertory Theatre offers in "Charley's Aunt", its third production this summer.

"Charley's Aunt" is the story of a college chap who masquerades as the aunt of one of his friends so he can help him out of a pickle.

It begins when two young chaps meet two young ladies and fall in love. They'd like to see more of the lasses, but the propriety of the time dictates that this can only be done in the presence of an adult. Charley's aunt is set to arrive from Brazil, so the boys plan to use her as the chaperon at the luncheon and tete-a-tete they've planned. The aunt then cables that she's been delayed. The boys have gone too far with their plans to cancel them and so persuade their roommate Fancourt Babberly to don a wig and dress and do the honors.

Much of the comedy comes from the complications that result as Babberly bustles through the halls of Oxford in Flaxen wig and ill-fitting skirts, fending off amorous advances from a couple of "dignified" older gentlemen. It

gets even funnier when the real aunt arrives and is introduced to "herself."

"Charley's Aunt" is directed by Carl Beck, a director from Omaha Community Playhouse.

This pandemonious look at Victorian England debuted in London at the Royalty Theatre in 1892. It was an immediate hit and ran continuously for four years. It opened in New York the following year. "Charley's Aunt" has played more than 100,000 times worldwide, having been translated into almost every possible language. At one time, there were as many as 40 different professional touring companies of the show throughout the world.

The cast of "Charley's Aunt" is excited about the production. Geoff Stephenson, who plays the self-confident Jack Chesney, enjoys the part because the character is young and ambitious.

"He gets to come up with so many ideas, and has a discovery around every corner," Stephenson said.

Stephenson also enjoys the approach local actors take in portraying their roles.

"They're not performing from the

first moment," he said, "They come to rehearsals ready to learn, to build a character from scratch rather than deciding on one beforehand and sticking with it."

Stephenson said he also enjoyed working on "Charley's Aunt" because "it's a very well-written and very funny show."

Nancy Marcy who plays the "real" aunt, has also enjoyed working on the show. For her, Beck's directing has been both challenging and very refreshing, helping her to develop as an actress.

"Sometimes a director will work from the inside out, leading you to find the proper motivations, subtext, inner monologue and so on," she said, "Then the outside will be expected to fall into place based on the inner life you've created. I would describe the way Carl is working on this show as from the outside in, which is a different approach and one that I've enjoyed immensely."

"He's given me a lot of the outside direction — has told me what he wants from my character and then left it up to me to work toward my inside life from there."

The cast also includes Jeffrey Talbott as Babberly, and John Corker as

the shy Charley Wykeham. Christopher Wineman appears as Brassett, Kevin Hofeditz is Jack's father, who is very interested in Charley's wealthy aunt. Also in the play are Charles Bachmann, Treva Tegtmeier and Karin Sue Floyd. "Charley's Aunt" opens tonight at Howell Theatre, located in the Temple

Building at 12th and 'R.' Other performance dates for "Charley's Aunt" are July 20, 24, 30, 31, August 1, 9, 10, 13, 22, 30, 31. The box office, in the Howell lobby, is open from 12-5 weekdays and 5-8 on performance nights. Admission is \$5. For more information call 472-2073.

Weekend...

Continued from Page 6

East Park 3 — Rambo, 1:40, 3:40, 5:40, 7:40 and 9:40 p.m.; Cocoon, 1, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45 and 10 p.m.; The Goonies, 1:20, 3:20, 5:20, 7:30 and 9:35 p.m.

Joyo Theatre — The Care Bear Movie, 7:30 p.m.

Plaza 4 — The Legend of Billie Jean, 12:15, 2:30, 4:45, 7 and 9 p.m.; The Man with the One Red Shoe, 12:30, 2:45, 5, 7:15 and 9:15 p.m.; Cocoon, 1, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45 and 10 p.m.; Mad Max Beyond the Thunderdome, 12:15, 2:45, 5, 7:30 and 10 p.m.

State Theatre — Silverado, 12, 2:30, 5, 7:30 and 10 p.m.

Stuart Theatre — Back To The Future, 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30 and 9:40 p.m.

84th and O St. Drive-In Theatre — Mad Max Beyond the Thunderdome and Road Warrior, begins at dusk.

Sheldon Film Theatre — Friday through Sunday, Lili Marlene, 7 and 9:15 p.m., with 3:00 matinees on Saturday and Sunday.

THEATER
Nebraska Repertory Theatre, Friday and Saturday Howell Theatre, 12th & R, "Charley's Aunt." Curtain at 8 p.m., admission is \$5.

Nebraska Directors Theatre, 1110 Q St., Friday through Sunday, Three one-acts: "Commanche Cafe," "Cop-Out," and "Rattlesnake in the Cooler." Curtain at 8 p.m., admission is \$4 and \$3 for students and senior citizens.

OMAHA

Omaha Magic Theatre, 1417 Farnam St., Omaha. "Mud." "A Dangerous and Funny Play — For Mature Audiences Only." Friday through Monday, curtain at 8:30 p.m. Admission is \$5 general and \$2 for students.

Joslyn Art Gallery, 2200 Dodge St., Omaha. "The World of Grandma Moses" exhibition, including approximately 60 works of the folk artist's. The exhibition ends Sunday.

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