

Arts & Entertainment

Wilde's 'Earnest' delightful Rep Theatre musical

By Scott Harrah
Senior Reporter

The name Oscar Wilde is synonymous with wit. "The Importance of Being Earnest," his greatest work, was one of the most hilarious, scathing satires of the 19th century. The Nebraska Repertory Theatre's production of "Earnest in Love," a musical farce based on Wilde's play, succeeds in capturing all the wit and raucous revelry of the original.

Kevin Hofeditz, a professional actor from the Actors' Equity Association, plays the dual role of Jack and Earnest, a suave English gentleman who changes

his name when he goes to the city or the country. He wants to marry the fair and lovely Gwendolyn Fairfax (Treva Tegmeier), but her class-conscious mother Lady Bracknell (Nancy March) won't let him because he was orphaned as a baby. Jack/Earnest was found in a handbag on a gentleman's porch as an infant, so no one knows who his real parents are. Lady Bracknell and Jack/Earnest break out into a hilarious rendition of "A Handbag is Not a Proper Mother."

Most of the musical involves the cases of mistaken identity that follow as a result of Jack/Earnest's mysterious background, and this creates some

fast-paced, frantically funny action that never lets up. The best aspect of the musical is the multitude of classic Wildean lines that author Anne Crowell incorporated. Lines like "You've either got to amuse people, feed them or shock them" are delivered with warmth, proper British accents and conviction.

Although this musical is not as penetrating and incisive as the play, it makes up for its flaws with lighthearted charm and some amusing songs. None of the cast members are phenomenal singers, but they give the lyrics enough punch and passion to be both believable and entertaining.

The set, a stylized melange of flowers,

pastel colors and Victorian elegance, sets the mood adequately. The cast often changes the scene on stage by moving furniture, which sacrifices some of the musical's realism. However, the Howell Theatre stage has no curtain, so this technique seems logical.

Nancy March gives the best performance as the haughty, braying old dowager Lady Bracknell. March is both plausible and engaging with her exaggerated facial expressions, bitchy lines and upper-middle-class snobbery.

Of all the characters, the biggest surprise is the maid Alice, who is portrayed flawlessly by Jill Anderson. This is one of those small roles that an actor or actress sometimes can use to steal the show. Such is the case with

Anderson, who is often hysterical with her hyperbolic, doll-like looks and mischievous aura.

Hofeditz and Morten Hansen, as the upbeat, clever Algernon Moncrieff, both deliver realistic British accents and performances.

Leslie VanHemert, who plays the ivory-skinned beauty Cecily Cardew, also gives a commendable performance, although her singing seems a bit strained at times.

"Earnest in Love" is a delightful musical that's light enough to be both entertaining and socially biting.

"Earnest in Love" is playing at the Howell Theatre on July 15, 22, 23 and 31, and August 4, 14. Tickets are available at the Temple box office.

Local bars host national bands

By Chris McCubbin
Senior Reporter

If you can get into the bars it hasn't been that bad a summer musically, and things are getting even better. At least five national acts are coming to town in the next few weeks.

Soul Asylum claims to be the loudest band in Minneapolis. That's no light boast when you consider fellow Minneapolitans like Husker Du and the Replacements. The big controversy in the music press right now is whether Soul Asylum is a hardcore band that sometimes uses country licks or a cowpunk band that has been forced to make hardcore records by its producer, Husker Du's Bob Mould. Figure it out for yourself at the Drumstick July 17.

Brave Combo returns to the Zoo Bar July 18 and 19. This Texas band describes its music as "Nuclear Polkas" (yeah, polkas.) Brave Combo started its

career with a tour of Texas mental institutions and an occasional wedding along the way. There's no middle ground with this band. You'll either love them or hate them. Keep an open mind and come prepared to dance.

Can a band from the midwest play authentic roots reggae? At least one can. The Blue Riddim Band, from, believe it or not, Lawrence, Kan., will be at the Drumstick July 24. If you've seen the new movie "Club Paradise" you've heard Blue Riddim; the band's song "Love People" is on the sound track.

Lost Highway is a young rock 'n' roll outfit from Houston. They're trying to walk the line between Skynyrd and the

Beat Farmers. With a few more albums under their belt they might even be able to do it. Even now they're well worth hearing. Check out their out-of-control cover of Springsteen's "Johnny 99" and the eerie ballad "Bloody Bones."

The Meat Puppets are strong contenders in this year's Next Big Thing sweepstakes. Their third album "Up on The Sun," has achieved minor cult status, and their new album, "Out My Way," is selling out at local record stores. This show is coming just two months after Curt Kirkwood, the band's ultra-fast resident guitar hero, broke a finger in a van door, forcing the band to cancel its last Lincoln show. See how he's doing at the Drumstick July 31.

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