

'Christmas Carol' is fresh despite yearly repetition

By Micki Haller
Senior Editor

While "A Christmas Carol" has been done so many times that it is almost a hoary chestnut, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's production makes it fresh.

theater REVIEW

Presented by the Department of Theater Arts and Dance and the College of Arts and Sciences, Charles Dickens' Christmas classic came to life on Howel Theater's stage.

"A Christmas Carol" has been done every year by the theater department, but this year's production had several outstanding points.

The set was one of the first things to strike the eye.

Designed by newcomer Larry Kaushansky, assistant professor of scenic design, the set was realistic down to the snow brushed in the cracks and crevices of the set.

The office, Scrooge's bedroom, the past, present and future all appeared through ingenious set devices; the walls, moved, holly dropped from the ceiling, Marley's ghost twisted out of the floor.

However, at some points, the crew appeared. Dressed in modern day

clothing, they briefly disrupted the illusion that the audience was in Dickens' England.

This was especially disturbing because, overall, the illusion was fantastic.

The costumes included sumptuous velvets and furs of the 19th century, and were extremely realistic. The makeup and the props also transformed these 20th century actors into proper Victorians.

Several of the cast members of "A Christmas Carol" also were members of the "Sweeney Todd" company, a musical collaboration between the Department of Theater Arts and Dance and the School of Music.

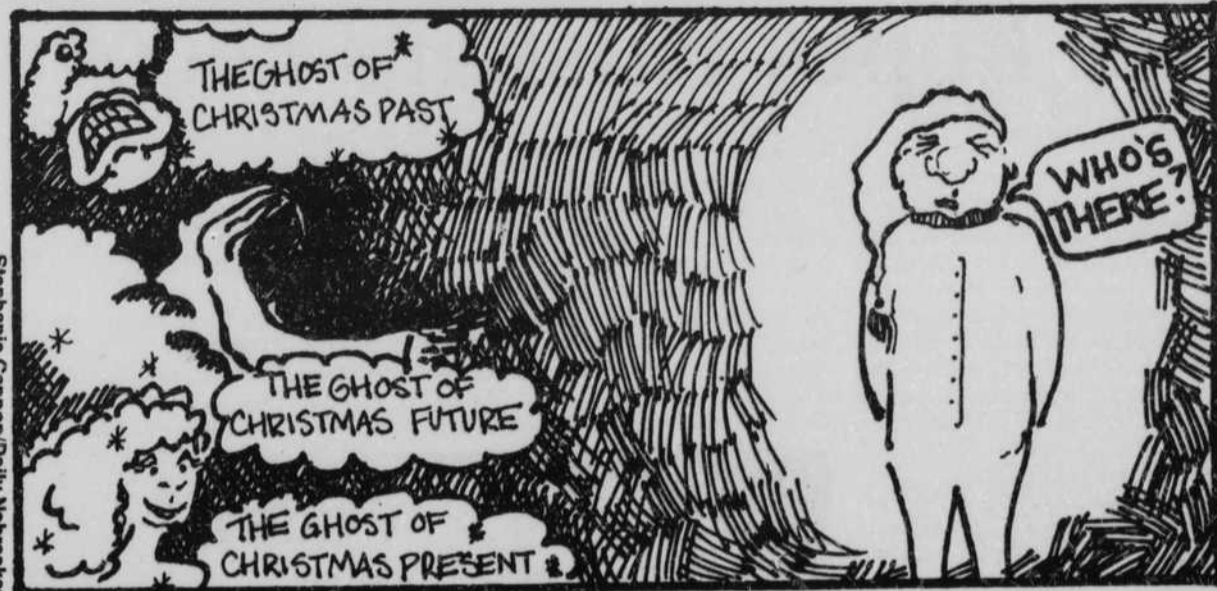
Perhaps "Sweeney Todd" brought a spirit of cooperation to this production, or at least gave the actors a better singing background.

The cast certainly had a strong camaraderie, something it was willing to share with the audience before the first act.

The players streamed down the aisle, chatting with other cast members, sitting in seats and reassuring the audience.

The acting varied from fair to excellent. Some players tended to ham up their roles a little, others played the parts fairly straight.

Especially good was the Cratchit family Christmas scene. Jenny Bar-



Stephanie Cannon/Daily Nebraskan

ron, Jim Hanna, Molly Kidwell, Christopher Reed Baker, Matt Wenzel and Christina Bost seemed like a close-knit family. But these were by no means the only ones who deserve kudos.

The production also managed to avoid the W.C. Fields-syndrome. With many children, and even The Empress Maude (billed as "a basset hound performing acting skill" in press releases), the stage was not usurped by the little darlings.

"A Christmas Carol" will be performed at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and Monday through Dec. 10. Matinee performances will be on both Saturdays at 3 p.m.

Radios to describe play for blind

From Staff Reports

A radio receiver about the size of a cigarette package will help the blind enjoy "A Christmas Carol" more on Saturday at 3 p.m.

For the first time, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Theater will offer a special presentation of the Charles Dickens classic for the visually impaired, in cooperation with Radio Talking Books of Omaha. The radios will transmit descriptions of costumes and other visual elements of the play.

Pat Overton, publicity coordinator for the UNL Department of Theater and Dance, said that for the past several seasons, UNL has offered sign-language performances for the deaf. The signing service also will be provided during Saturday's matinee.

The performance for the blind was suggested by Bob Nalley of Lincoln, who tunes pianos for the Department

of Theater Arts and Dance, and is the chairman of the board for Radio Talking Books.

The Omaha Association for the Blind gave Radio Talking Books a \$2,200 grant to buy the transmitting equipment and 30 headset receivers.

Richard Zlab, director of Radio Talking Books, said the service was provided last summer at a Fireside Dinner Theater presentation of "The Music Man," and at a performance of "My Fair Lady" at the Lincoln Community Playhouse in August.

Jan Moritz will narrate "The Christmas Carol."

Moritz has worked with Zlab for several years in the production of special presentations for the visually handicapped broadcast live from Omaha.

Moritz will be in the Howel Theater lighting booth to describe the visual elements of the production, including costumes, setting, staging

and other action that happens without accompanying dialogue.

Zlab said the presentations for the visually impaired have been well received.

"People who'd attended 'The Music Man' previously told me that the radio receivers made it possible for them to really understand for the first time how the musical ended.

"If you think about it, you may recall that there isn't any real dialogue in the last five minutes. All those young musicians come on stage playing '76 Trombones' and Marian, the librarian, consents to be Professor Harold Hill's wife without a word being spoken."

Radio Talking Books bought 85 tickets for Saturday's matinee of "A Christmas Carol." The group distributed the tickets in Lincoln and Omaha. About 15 Omahans will come to Lincoln for the performance, Zlab said.

the minimal list

UPC sponsors films

"Yellow Submarine," a movie by the Beatles, will show tonight at 7 and 9 p.m. in the Nebraska Union as part of the University Program Council's American Film Series. Tickets are \$1 for University of Nebraska-Lincoln students, \$2 for non-students. The room number will be posted.

"The Wannsee Conference," part of the UPC Foreign Film Series, will be at Sheldon Film Theater Sunday at 3, 5, 7 and 9 p.m. Admission is \$4, or \$3 for UNL students.

'Laser Fantasy' this weekend

"Christmas Laser Fantasy" will be at the Mueller Planetarium on Saturday and Sunday at 2 p.m.

Christmas art show at Wesleyan

"A Kaleidoscopic Christmas" opens today at the University Place Art Center/Wesleyan Laboratory Gallery, 2601 N. 48th St.

The exhibit, which runs through December, includes hand-constructed kaleidoscopes by Linda and Chuck Kirk of North Platte, and Loren Rice of Lincoln.

Mixed media, including paintings, photography, glass and wood, will follow the theme of the kaleidoscope.

The gallery is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Mondays through Saturdays, and 1 to 5 p.m. on Sundays until Dec. 24. The Art Center will be closed the week between Christmas and New Year.

Star City on parade Saturday

The fourth annual Star City Holiday Parade starts at 11 a.m. Saturday, and follows a mile-long route in downtown Lincoln.

Giant balloons, floats, marching bands, costumed characters, walking units and other presentations will appear in the parade. For more information see story in the Daily Nebraskan Christmas supplement.

Mansions celebrate Victorian holiday

"A Victorian Holiday" is a reason to visit the Kennard and Ferguson Mansions at 16th and H streets. The Victorian splendor of these Lincoln houses is worth the \$1 donation to both homes.

'Halloween' album is pure entertainment, reviewer says

By Michael Deeds
Senior Reporter

Halloween
Keeper of the Seven Keys Part II
RCA Records

Halloween is a band with a fantasy sound. Halloween is a band with pumpkins in their videos. Halloween is a band that you could call stupid if you really think about it.

But — name aside and jack-o'-lanterns smashed — in the raw, the band is a solid commercial speed metal band with some halfway intelligent lyrics.

Although sword and sorcery prevails on the album cover of Halloween's latest release, "Keeper of the Seven Keys Part II," the lyrics range from fantasy to simple political ideals.

Sounding surprisingly like veteran musicians Iron Maiden at times, Halloween comes through with intricate melody lines and chunky thrash rhythms linking the soprano-like shrieking of vocalist Michael Kiske.

Drummer Ingo Schwichtenberg must have tired legs playing tunes



Courtesy of RCA Records

off this album in because nearly every song utilizes the thump-thump of the double bass

drum while he keeps an even tempo with the melodies.

But the drums are an effective

tool in establishing power in the music of Halloween. This power contrasts oddly, but interestingly, with the vocal harmonies during many of the choruses. Harmonies like these are fairly difficult, and credit should be given to Kiske.

Strong tracks include "I Want Out," also an MTV video, which deals with the social and moral pushing that goes on as young people grow older. "Save Us" is a philosophical, almost phantasmal, trip into the utter meekness of the human race.

"Dr. Stein" also has been released as a single, and tells the story of a madman and his experimentation with cloning and DNA structures.

Halloween is one of those bands whose music is pure entertainment, unlike the depressing seriousness of harder speed metal thrashers like Metallica. The album is simply there to enjoy, not to ponder for extreme lengths of time and space.

The guitar work of Kai Hansen and Michael Weikate is not exceptional, but adequate in providing grabbing solos. They often alternate, Glenn Tipton/K.K. Down-

ing-(Judas Priest) style, which is effective in trying to distinguish separate melodic styles.

The apparent "big deal" of the album is the title track, "Keeper of the Seven Keys," which lasts for more than 13 minutes. This is a definite sword-and-sorcery tune.

"Guided by spells/of the old seer's hand/you're suffering pain/only steel can stand."

And the lyrics go on to mention dwarves, evil, Lucifer, armor, a curse . . . you get the meaning.

If lyrics like this excite you, then this must be your song. It is certainly long enough.

Halloween is a German band, which may account for part of this superworld stuff. Most American bands have burned out on this with the exception of Ronnie James Dio and Iron Maiden. But this is not all bad. It's better than mediocre bands trying to sing about politics or Satan.

Halloween deserves some credit. It came out with pumpkins flying and made it in the U.S.

"Keeper" is not a bad album. Serious metal fans should probably pick it up.

Happy Halloween.