

Karamazovs' New Age Vaudeville delights

By Micki Haller
Senior Editor

Vaudeville is not dead. The Flying Karamazov Brothers is the reincarnation of the bawdy, physical, raucous comedy that entertained masses at vaudeville houses in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The troupe proved its heritage, and added a hi-tech twist (with a double gainer) at Kimball Hall Monday night.

kimball REVIEW

The old stuff included slapstick humor, terrible puns, old schticks, juggling, singing, dancing, "cheap theatrics," an "anything for a laugh" attitude and even a jury made up of Charlie McCarthy dolls.

Added to this incredible mixture were references to modern culture (like the Elvis craze), portrayals of the homeless, allusions to Oriental zen techniques and mention of the ozone layer.

All this was accompanied by the slap, slap, slap of clubs against the jugglers' palms.

The early evening audience loved it, slurped it up, and asked, with lightning-quick and thunder-loud applause, for more.

Surprisingly, for a juggling troupe, the show didn't focus on juggling a great deal.

There was a lot of juggling, and some of the work with four-person juggling was astounding, but there

was never more than three clubs per person in action. There were no flaming rings of fire. Only twice in the show were the exotic juggling tools introduced: the sharp-edged object act, and "The Gamble."

In this piece, the Champ (Ivan, aka Howard Jay Patterson) juggles three objects between an ounce and 10 pounds each, and no bigger than a breadbox. The Champ is allowed three modifications.

The audience offered a variety: a greasy paper plate with keys attached, flashlight, a feather and notes. The winners were a green slinky, a "strange" ball that wasn't balanced properly and a grape-jelly sandwich impaled on an icicle.

The Champ, after initial problems with the elongated slinky and a decomposing sandwich, triumphed by hog-tying the slinky and squeezing the sandwich into a bread-ball.

However, most of the show centered around humor, singing, dancing and drama. The juggling seemed to be almost tangential, but tied everything together.

For intermission, members of the troupe got together to sing "Somewhere Out In The Lobby" to promote its merchandise. The humor often mocked the troupe itself.

Twice during the show, the humor drifted into the risqué.

During the sharp-edged object juggling act, one of the members was stabbed by a flying scythe.

"Shit," he screamed.

"This is a family show," the last surviving member exclaimed. "You

can't say that on stage."

Of course, the wounded trouper staggered off-stage, and . . . Well, cheap jokes are a trademark of vaudeville.

The other bawdy scene involved the "Maltese Flagon," in a rip-off of old detective movies. One of the characters (Smerdyakov, or Sam Williams) colorfully described a bar.

"The liquor was like playing with yourself -- one drink, and you'll go

blind."

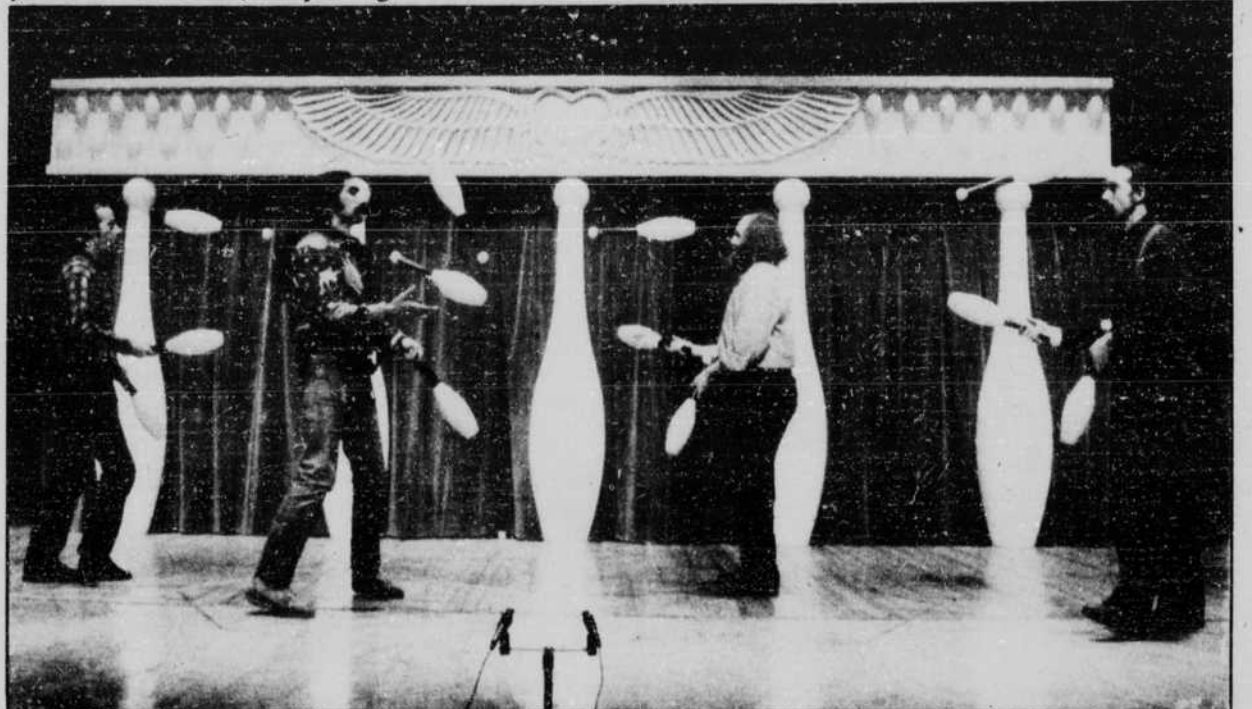
The finale dazzled most brilliantly, however, in an assortment of sophisticated electronic instruments, radio transmitters, helmets with drum pick-ups, and so on and so forth.

The four men (including Dmitri, or Paul David Magid, and Fyodor, aka Timothy Furst) played a Beethoven song by bashing themselves on the heads, and progressed to

a juggling rock song about the way modern conveniences are wrecking the atmosphere.

Overall, The Flying Karamazov Brothers were brilliant, funny, enjoyable, amazing, astounding, wonderful and every other superlative adjective in the dictionary.

It makes one wonder why the powers that be ever called Vaudeville dead.



Allen Schaben/Daily Nebraskan

The Flying Karamazov Brothers warm up at rehearsal Monday evening in Kimball Hall

Boy detective solves copy theft, mysterious meter maid murder

By Jim Hanna
Staff Humorist

Ellery Queen was good. Charlie Chan was better. Encyclopedia Brown was the best of all.

humor HANNA

Yet none of these so called detectives can hold a candle to the greatest mystery detective of all: Crump P.I. -- Boy Detective.

Making the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus safe from assorted criminal capers, Crump works out of the 1977 Mercury Cougar he got from his mom.

When a petty crime is committed on campus, Crump uses his keen insight into UNL life to piece together the facts of the case and find the solution.

And he is never wrong. Do you care to match wits with the greatest living detective of all time? Then try out the brain teasers below.

These are two of Crump's most famous cases. (The tales are told in first person, Crump's favorite narrative mode).

MYSTERY 1: THE CASE OF THE COPIER CRIME

I was sitting in the parking lot of Taco Inn in the 1977 Mercury Cougar I got from my mom (she bought herself a new Ford Escort). I got a call on my car phone.

"Crump, this is Capt. Williams with the Lincoln Police Department," the voice on the other end said.

"Hi Captain, what jam can I get you out of this week?"

"Well, we've got a joker down here who's been arrested for tampering with the key counters over at Kinko's. It seems he went to Kinko's, made about 4,000 copies of his face and then somehow reset the counter. It shows he only made seven copies. I think he's guilty, but dammit Crump, his alibi is air-tight. Can you coerce this creepy criminal into cracking, Crump?"

"Now, captain, There's no need for swearing or for alliteration. Put this criminal on."

The criminal got on the phone. "Hello?"

"Hi, Crump P.I. here. I understand you made about 4,000 copies of your face at Kinko's and then reset the counter," I said with a sneer, the

effect of which is lost over the phone.

"That's the problem. I didn't get the copies made at Kinko's. I made all 4,000 copies this morning on the machines at Love Library. I went to Kinko's later in the day to copy an employment resume," said the sniveling punk.

"I see," I said, nodding sagely. "Tell me about your trip to Love Library."

"Well, I'm from out of town, so I didn't know where to get copies. I saw the library and assumed they had a copier."

"Go on," I said.

"Well, I walked into the front door, found my way to the information desk and asked where I could find a copier. A very, very friendly person behind the desk smiled warmly at me and directed me to the nearest copier."

"I see," I said. "What did you think of our humble library?"

"Oh, I loved it," he screamed. "Such friendly people, such high-tech copying facilities, and the building, I have never been inside of a better designed library. Whatever architect designed that building was a genius. And the interior design, it's just heaven. The colors blend exquisitely into a delightful tapestry that thrills the senses."

"I see," I said, stroking my chin in thought. "Put Capt. Williams back on the line."

"Williams here. What did you learn Crump?"

"Captain, I've learned that you're sitting with a sick criminal. Arrest that punk and charge him with counter tampering!"

How did Crump know the man was lying?

ANSWER: Crump knew that the man could not possibly have been to Love Library. The only person who could describe it as a work of architectural genius with pleasing interior design and high-tech copiers is a person who's never been there. The man obviously made up his visit to Love Library to cover up his counter-tampering scheme.

When confronted by Capt. Williams, the man fell into a gurgling, sobbing lump and confessed to the crime.

MYSTERY 2: THE CASE OF THE DEAD METER MAID

I was driving down 12th Street in

my 1977 Mercury Cougar looking for a good crime to crack.

When I saw a meter maid lying in a pool of her own blood beneath a parking meter, I knew I had found a good one.

Standing beside the body was a young woman with a smoking revolver in her hand. She was covered in blood and screaming obscenities at the corpse. She was sitting on the hood of a car which I assumed to be her's. There was a parking ticket under the windshield wiper. I immediately pegged this woman as a suspect.

"Excuse me ma'am. Did you shoot this meter monitor?" I asked.

The woman looked up at me with crazed eyes. Tears streaked her face.

"Who . . . me?" she asked. "No, I just came walking by here and found her body. This gun was lying on the ground so I picked it up."

Her alibi was strong and tight. I had no way of proving she shot this meter maid. But still . . . something didn't seem right; something in her story just didn't jive with me. I continued questioning her.

"Are you sure you didn't shoot her?" I asked, my eyes probing her soul like a dental pick.

There was a tense moment of silence. Then, she broke.

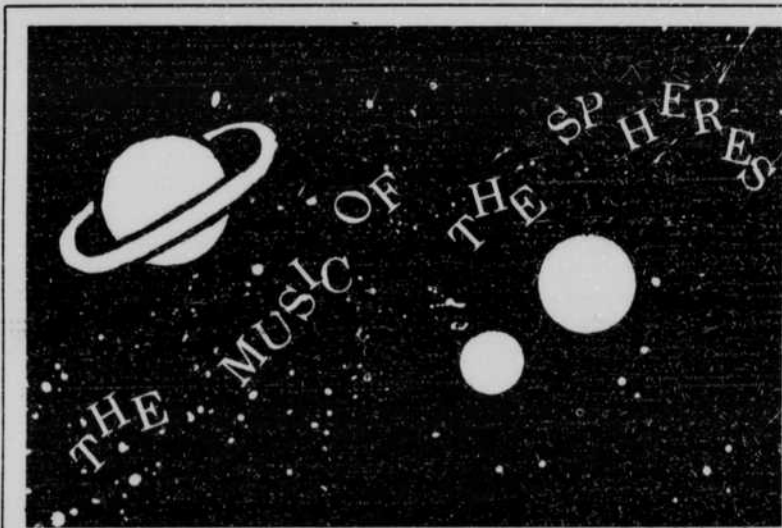
"All right, I did it. I shot her. But I just can't get another ticket. One more and they'll tow my car. When I saw her writing me up, I just snapped and blew her away. I wouldn't be able to get around if they towed my car," she wept.

"Having your car towed is the least of your worries now. I don't think you'll need a car where you're going -- prison!" I said as I slapped the cuffs on her.

How did Crump know that she was the murderer and that her first story was phony?

ANSWER: Crump picked up on the clues an untrained eye would have missed. He realized the smoking gun meant that it was just fired. The gun would not have been smoking if the murderer dropped it and ran. Also, he found the woman in a fit of hysteria, screaming at the body which a mere passerby would be unlikely to do.

Crump picked up on these subtleties and nailed the murdering parker to the wall.



Stephanie Cannon/Daily Nebraskan

Lasers flash in Mueller after two dark months

By Larry Peirce
Senior Reporter

After two months of darkness, dazzling laser beams are flashing once again with the music across the dome at Mueller Planetarium.

The planetarium began a new season last month after being closed for Morrill Hall construction since December.

The break allowed coordinator Jack Dunn and his part-time staff of four students to work on upcoming "Laser Fantasies" shows which attract audiences of different ages and musical tastes.

Bad weather slowed attendance at the planetarium's Friday night laser shows, which featured the music of U2, but 200 people came for three Saturday shows, said Erik Hubl, an undeclared junior who works at the planetarium.

Dunn said Laser Fantasies is more than a laser show because it includes special effects, slides and a laser disc video projector. The "star projector," which is used for regular astronomy shows, and an artificial smoke machine also are used in some shows.

The shows feature music from 20 different artists or groups. Other shows sponsored by area radio stations feature "oldies, jazz and country" music, Dunn said.

"We're churning them out," he said.

During the shows, a "laserist" operates a small keyboard and control panel to manipulate the size, motion and shape of patterns created when laser beams are emitted

through "beam splitters."

The complex patterns appear to be computer-controlled, Dunn said, but actually are controlled by the laserist, who must choose the laser patterns that match the music.

"Straight-ahead hard rock patterns are simpler," he said. "U2 looks different than Mannheim Steamroller."

The light patterns that go with Led Zeppelin music need a lot of power to match the music, while jazz requires more subtle light patterns, he said.

Operating the laser keyboard is like playing a musical instrument, Dunn said, but the laserist is working with light, not music.

"It's interpretation, like painting," Dunn said.

Experience allows a laserist to interpret and plan laser patterns for different songs, Dunn said. The laserist must know the music to make the laser patterns change with the music, he said.

Dunn said shows aren't planned too far in advance because they must be updated. If a band produces a new album, the staff must quickly incorporate new songs into the show routine, he said.

Dunn said he spends evenings preparing shows because the planetarium is occupied during the day. The planetarium presents up to 16 astronomy shows per week, and 10,000 to 15,000 elementary and high school students visit the planetarium each year, he said.

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