

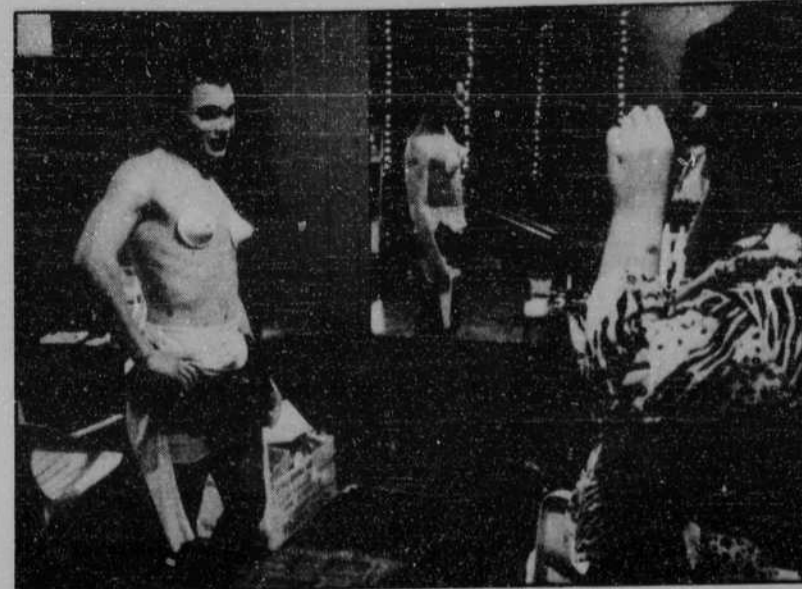
G • B • SHAW'S

Shaw turns cherished ideas of love and patriotism topsy-turvy in this "entertaining battle of wits, manners and mores."

HOWELL THEATRE  
APRIL 20 - 28  
8 PM

UNL THEATRE & DANCE  
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ARMS & THE MAN



Clockwise from top left: Champagne Lorraine poses for a picture before he finishes dressing. Lafayette has performed in Lincoln and throughout the Midwest for the last 13 years. His specialty is Aretha Franklin impersonations. Mercedes applies blush to his face. Mercedes adjusts his dress backstage. A makeup kit, bobby pins and cigarettes cram the table.

Photo of Lafayette Courtesy of Lafayette

### Fe/male

Continued from Page 6

The first number would be a duo dance/lip sync routine of "Drop that Bottom," by L'TRIMM, a rhythm and rap song featuring Mercedes and Champagne. Right before they went on stage B.B.Q. hollered out from the dressing room to them, "go break a nail."

Mercedes and Champagne sauntered onto stage and exploded into action, using every square inch of the 25-by-7 foot stage. During this routine they distinguished themselves both as dynamic dancers (no small feat, excuse the pun, for anyone wearing high-heel pumps) and as good lip syncers -- setting the high-energy tempo for the rest of the show.

For almost the next two hours, these four men entertained the 60 or so people in the audience, convincing them they were women.

Convincing is the only word for these impersonators.

They looked like women, from the makeup and hair to the dresses they wore and the way they filled them out.

They moved like women, from the delicate way they held the microphone when they sang or the way they daintily kissed their hand and waved to the audience when they finished a number, to the way they moved their hips when they walked.

They acted like women, all kinds of women. A flapper. Carmen Miranda, complete with tropical fruit headwear. A leather- and chain-clad, new wave glam, sado-masochistic dominatrix. An innocent prom queen. Gloria Estafan. Even Paula Abdul, complete with M.C. Cat. One quick change after the other, after the other, after the other. All night long.

Well, they almost always acted like women. About midway through the first set, TASHA was performing a very saucy dance routine. He was wearing a revealing, extremely loose-fitting, sparkly, silver, disco toga mini-dress and was insinuating himself all up and down the stage, much to the audience's delight. He was shaking everything he had, making prolonged eye contact with everyone and pouting sensually. The audience was clapping in time with the lively beat. After awhile, the clapping fizzled out. The audience was completely engrossed. Then TASHA stopped what he was doing, put his hands on his hips, threw his head back

and said with a note of disdain, "I didn't tell you to stop clapping."

Only in a man's voice. But that kind of breaking character, if done right, seems to be part of the humor of the show -- reminding the audience who and what these performers really are after all.

By about 12:30 a.m., the show was over. Mercedes was worn out. Champagne was disgusted. B.B.Q. was quiet and reflective. And TASHA was all wound up and glowing.

Champagne, Mercedes and B.B.Q. have been performing as female impersonators for less than a year, which is pretty amazing considering the level of professionalism of their performances. TASHA has been performing for 7 1/2 years. Another Lincoln impersonator, Lafayette, who didn't perform Sunday night, has 13 years experience. They all agree female impersonation is a lot of things. It's hard work. It's fun. And it's a fascinating form of entertainment.

### Hard Work

Practice. Female impersonators must learn to look and move like women. According to Marty Crowl, bar manager and show director at the Boardwalk, many impersonators spend 20 hours a week just practicing old routines and working up new ones. And if the performers are getting ready for an upcoming show, they take even more time. They must pay attention to many small music, costume, prop and makeup details, in addition to rehearsal time. Crowl said it is not uncommon for a performer to spend 100 hours practicing and preparing for a two-hour show.

Crowl said female impersonators must learn to overexaggerate feminine qualities to be believable. "Since you are a man and are probably bigger-boned and have a larger face and different hair, you have to overdo the femininity to pull it off," Crowl said. "Alexis Carrington (from the television show 'Dynasty') is the epitome of a good drag queen, because everything she does is exaggerated, from her bust line to her pumps."

Impersonators also need to learn some basic skills and know which physical qualities to exaggerate and which to minimize to make themselves believable.

"The main important thing is to learn how to walk in pumps," Champagne said.

"I have to put on extra lips,

See FE/MALE on 10



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