

'M. Butterfly' flutters into Nebraska theater

By Stacie Hakel
Staff Reporter

Before planning another average night-at-the-movies, be sure and check out "M. Butterfly."

With its erotic dancing, twisting plot and unbelievable ending, "M. Butterfly" makes for an intriguing play, well worth watching.

Based on a true story, "M. Butterfly" takes place in China during the Vietnam War. A married French diplomat, Renee Gallimard (David Landis), has a 25-year love affair with a Chinese opera star, Song Liling (J. Ranara).

But Renee's sweet little Butterfly isn't what he thought she was.

Song is giving confidential information about the war to the Chinese Communist government.

Renee is blind to Song's scheme, as he is too preoccupied with his promotion to vice counsel and maintaining control over his submissive Butterfly, Song.

Only until Renee is convicted of espionage does he discover Song's real identity.

This incredible account dealt with numerous intertwined meanings, with themes of eastern and western cultures, as well as men and women's perceptions of each other.

Utilizing parallels to Puccini's "Madame Butterfly," the play deals with little opera, but fills that gap with humor.

Author David Henry Hwang has a history of writing excellent plays — "The Dance and The Railroad," "FOB" and "Family Devotions."

Again Hwang has overwhelmed his audience with the Broadway play "M. Butterfly."

Not only has "M. Butterfly" won the Tony Award for best play, but also won the Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Broadway Play, the John Gassner Award for Best American Play and the Drama Desk for Best New Play.

Hwang said in an interview with the New York Daily News that he chose the "Madame Butterfly" theme because he thought there were some parallels and some strong differences between a Western man and an Oriental woman.

"I wanted to set up a structure at the beginning where the Frenchman identifies himself with Pinkerton, the American Navy officer who exploits Butterfly. He even calls the lover Butterfly," Hwang said.

Overall, "M. Butterfly" was well done, thanks to the help of director Nancy Colto and the help of choreographer Yunyu Wang.

The Nebraska Repertory Theatre is a Nebraska tradition that stages brilliant theater productions, and "M. Butterfly" is no exception. The acting, costumes, set and lighting were all exquisitely done.

The actors and actresses, professionals and "amateurs" alike, successfully immersed their viewers into the Orient.

In its 25th season, The Nebraska Repertory Theatre has introduced the play to Lincoln at the Howell Theatre located at 12th and R Streets.

The play will be shown until July 4.

Leno gets mixed reviews

LOS ANGELES (AP) — To hear Jay Leno and Helen Gorman Kushnick tell it, the maiden month of NBC's "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno" has gone extremely well.

"Everything's going good," Leno said in a phone interview last week. "We seem to be getting good response."

Kushnick, Leno's manager for the last 17 years and now the executive producer of America's favorite late-night talkshow, is even more positive.

"It's going wonderfully well," she said.

Neither assessment is completely accurate.

Since Leno donned Johnny Carson's crown on May 25, life at the network's late-night palace has not been a fairy tale.

Reviews have been mixed. The dismantling of Carson's staff and the assembling of Leno's has produced tension at NBC's Burbank studios.

Replacing the 30-year king of late-night television is no easy feat, but the first month has been more difficult than Kushnick and Leno let on.

Both Kushnick and Leno brush criticism aside.

"That's OK," Leno said. "Welcome to show business."

Both also say they believe the show's foundation is basically fine and that with a little fine-tuning, primarily in paring down the number of nightly guests, is all that's slacking.

Leno's interviewing style is decidedly different from his predecessor's. Gone are the requisite plugs for each guest's newest effort. In a recent appearance by "Lethal Weapon 3" star Danny Glover, the film was not discussed.

Instead, Leno and Glover spent most of the segment talking about the black actor's recent toe surgery and an experience in Manhattan where cab drivers refused to stop for him.

"The idea of a famous black person not being able to get a cab was more important" than pitching the actor's projects, Leno said.

So far, Leno's ratings have been good, and have reflected a younger audience. In his third week on the job, Leno's numbers were 6 percent higher than Carson's for the same period last year.

But from week No. 1 to week No. 3, Leno's numbers dropped from a 6.6 average rating to a 5.3 — a decline of about 30 percent. Each ratings point represents 921,000 households.



Batman returns Caped Crusader breaks records

'Batman Returns'



By Gerry Beltz
Staff Reporter

When "Batman" came out a few years ago, one adjective that was synonymous with the movie was "dark."

movie

Let's just say that the long-awaited and highly-publicized "Batman Returns" (Stuart and Edgewood Theaters) leaves the original in its shadow for darkness.

Before the credits even start rolling, the dismal scene for the movie is set when the audience views an apparently disfigured baby hurled into the river, carriage and all, by his own parents.

However, it is this darkness that helps the movie shine.

Michael Keaton reprises his role as the caped crusader Batman/

Bruce Wayne, a man struggling between two identities. Also returning is Michael Gough as Alfred, Wayne's faithful butler and confidant.

Danny DeVito comes in as the Penguin, the baby that was abandoned by his own parents and has grown up in the sewers of Gotham City.

Also starring is Michelle Pfeiffer as the timid Selina Kyle, Wayne's love interest for the movie and one of Batman's more formidable enemies after she becomes Catwoman.

Another impressive performance in "Batman Returns" comes from Christopher Walken ("A View To A Kill") as Max Shreck, a ruthless, manipulative businessman who will do anything to get his power plant built.

When Schreck's secretary, Kyle, discovers information she shouldn't, he attempts to kill her, but she survives to become Catwoman, a villainess who is thirsty for revenge.

The movie doesn't have just the standard "supervillain-plot-for-destruction," but features several

plots around various characters. One plot spins off of the original television series when the Penguin ran for mayor against Batman in the 1960s.

Tim Burton is again at the main helm for the second installment of the Batman movies, and has worked up a terrific piece of work. His vision of Gotham City has that mix of 1930s settings (sets, clothing, crooks with tommy guns) and modern hardware (computers, a "Bat CD player").

Keaton plays his role wonderfully, even though his general stature doesn't keep with the "traditional" vision of Wayne/Batman (let's face it, this man has no chin).

Pfeiffer is excellent as Kyle, who changes from a shy and timid secretary to the Catwoman — a seductress in black tights wielding a mean whip.

DeVito is terrific as Oswald "Penguin" Cobblepot. DeVito reportedly wore four latex suits for his role as well as other make-up and effects for his character (designed by Stan Winston).

See 'BATMAN' on 8