

# 'Fausto' combines 14th, 20th century yarns

Dutch adaptation alters legendary context, drama



By Matthew Grant  
Staff Reporter

"Fausto," a contemporary Dutch opera, held its North American premiere in the Lied Center for Performing Arts Saturday, combining stories from the 14th and the 20th centuries with a timeless theme.

This avant-garde performance had no interval, no scene breaks and, despite being billed as "an opera with bicycles," no bikes.

The plot centered on the true story of the tragic love life of Fausto Coppi, the "campionissimo" of Italian cycling.

Coppi falls from grace when he falls in love with the wrong woman. Disgraced in the eyes of the public and excommunicated by the pope, he eventually dies after an ill-fated cycling race in Africa.

The opera is also a re-telling of the Faust legend — about a man who sells



Vincent de Lange, Astrid Seriese, Hans de Vries and Simon Limbrick appear in "Fausto," an opera by Harry de Wit.

his soul to the devil for worldly gain. Harry de Wit, composer, and Jan Ritsema, director, took a self-consciously modern approach to their subject, most notably by playing down the story's drama.

Each actor was given a particular part, but they did not play out these

roles. Instead, the six performers alternated the singing of each character's lines. This gave an impression of a story being told rather than acted.

To add to this effect the musicians were also on the stage, including de Wit on piano. The stage was bleak apart from a few chairs, which the

singers spent most of the show seated in.

The costuming was not period clothing, but was deliberately extravagant, intended to reflect the decadence of pre-war Italy, said Kit Voorhees, director of education and outreach at the Lied, at a pre-performance speech.

Instead of shaping the highs and lows of Coppi's career and love life into a series of dramatic crescendos, de Wit stuck to slow, simple melodies, apart from one up-tempo passage that represented a cycle race.

The passage was repeated three times. Its contrast to the rest of the scoring gave it increased forcefulness and it seemed to stand for all the drive behind the ambitious Coppi.

By deliberately avoiding all other chances for high drama, the production appeared to be trying to convey the deeper emotion of the Faust legend.

Placed in a modern setting such as this, the story of Faust becomes primarily an examination of ambition and not the power of evil — unless the two are inexorably connected.

Part of the desire that feeds Faust Coppi's ambition in this opera is the desire to be loved and worshipped by the public; but the crowds at the bicycle races always prefer his rival, Bartali.

When Coppi finds true love, the cost is disgrace in the eyes of the public and the church. He is forced to turn his back on public opinion to pursue his own desires. This final victory is a lonely one. What de Wit seems to imply is that, nonetheless, it is a victory of greater significance.

Fausto opened the third annual Artists of the Lied Festival that will run for the next five months.

## Artists deliver spiritual, passionate performances

### concert REVIEW

By Stacey McKenzie  
Senior Reporter

Percussionist Kahil El' Zabar and Grammy Award-winning tenor saxophonist David Murray spun a musical tale of spirituality Sunday night at the Carson Theater.

Alone, each performer is passionate, but together, they performed with such concentration that they were able to simultaneously mesmerize and shock the audience.

El' Zabar and Murray played eight selections during the show.

Each selection had some similarities: a form, harmony and rhythm at the beginning and ending, and middle sections that were somewhat soloistic.

"What we are trying to be, is free," El' Zabar said during a question-answer session that followed the performance.

Free they were. El' Zabar moved freely between his wide selection of percussion instruments, many of which were from Africa. His body was the most prominent instrument as every limb moved to an internal rhythm.

Murray moved freely over the buttons of his saxophone. He was all over it with an intensity that put the audience on chairs' edges.

His almost circular breathing, he said later, is not special, but a common thing among most experienced

saxophonists. The duet dedicated one song to jazz greats who have died: Sarah Vaughn, Dexter Gordon, Eddie Blackwell and Miles Davis.

They also did something in honor of the ancestors.

"I always do something for the ancestors, because without them, we could not be," El' Zabar said.

The duet played for more than 2 1/2 hours.

El' Zabar said he wanted to keep Murray playing as long as he could because Murray had flown to Nebraska from Istanbul, Turkey, and was leaving Monday for Europe.

During the question-answer session, Murray was asked about the spirituality of playing. The music can become a musician's religion after the mechanical side of playing is down pat, he said.

Jazz is Murray's religion. "If I don't live right, I won't play right," he said.

Chicago-born El' Zabar, who performed at UNL last year, is considered one of the most prolific improvisational jazz innovators of his generation.

In his more than 20-year musical career, El' Zabar has performed with Dizzy Gillespie, Lester Bowie, Stevie Wonder, Cannonball Adderly, Paul Simon and Nina Simone.

There will be a reception for Kahil El' Zabar from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. Friday at The Mill, 8th and P streets.

## Strong leads dot new releases

### Sequel, bio-pic top out list of week's videos



By Anne Steyer  
Staff Reporter

Finally, a week where there are actually movies to write about — the Babe, the bat, the cat and the penguin, and a little love on ice.

"The Babe" John Goodman (television's "Rosanne") stars as Yankee baseball legend Babe Ruth. The film follows Ruth from his troubled childhood to his instantaneous notoriety as baseball's numero uno slugger, and finally, to his retirement from America's favorite pastime.

As with most bio-pics, this one takes more than a few liberties with the truth. But the very talented Goodman finally gets a starring role — and one that allows him to shine. "The Babe" also stars Kelly McGillis ("Top Gun") and Trini Alvarado ("Stella"). (Available 10/21)

"Batman Returns" Batman is back and he's not alone. Director Tim Burton and the Caped Crusader return to Gotham City with a cat and a bird in tow.

Danny DeVito is the Penguin, a supposedly misunderstood orphan who's running for mayor with the help of unscrupulous businessman Max Shreck (Christopher Walken of "The Deerhunter").

Michelle Pfeiffer is Shreck's nervous secretary Selena Kyle, who finds power and mental imbalance as Catwoman. Pfeiffer is definitely the star of this show and provides a strong, though troubled, female lead.

Bah! to the Batman critics who've booed Michael Keaton as an ineffectual Batman. Keaton is sexier than ever, and the chemistry between him and Pfeiffer is undeniable.

Burton again provides a richly dark, artistic film, though he still has yet to provide continuity or a strong plot line.

"Batman Returns" is disjointed, like a jigsaw puzzle where none of the pieces fit quite right. But take each piece individually, and you get a tremendous dose of Burton's imagery and vision.

Although a disappointment to some, this one comes highly recommended. (Available 10/21)

"The Cutting Edge" Moira Kelley and D.B. Sweeney star as a prima donna figure skater in need of a partner and an Olympic ex-hockey player in need of a job.

The poor little rich girl must learn to get along with a blue-collar sportsman to compete in the rink. But once together, they cause a major meltdown while competing for an Olympic gold.

Comedy, action, and romance — coupled with some impressive figure skating — make this one worth watching. (Available 10/21)

"U2: Achtung Baby; the Videos, the Cameos and a Whole Lot of Interference From Zoo TV"

This rockumentary begins with a look at the history of the band, complete with scenes from the recording of "Achtung Baby" in Berlin, to the touring roadshow of Zoo TV.

Exclusive footage of "Even Better Than The Real Thing" and a never-seen-before video for "Until The End Of The World" are included. There are numerous interview clips also. (Available 10/20)

## Visuals, special effects save mediocre horror flick



### "Candyman"



By Gerry Beltz  
Staff Reporter

One thing is for sure, "Candyman" (Edgewood 3, Douglas 3) is NOT for the squeamish.

Set in Chicago, graduate students Helen Lyle (Virginia Madsen of "Highlander 2" and "The Hot Spot") and her friend, Bernadette (Vanessa Williams), are doing their thesis on urban legends, with special attention paid to the mythical Candyman.

A slave killed by an angry mob in the late 1800s, the Candyman had his

right hand sawed off and replaced by a hook. He then was covered with bees and subsequently was stung to death.

Now legend says that if someone looks into the mirror and says "Candyman" five times, he will appear "breathing down your neck."

Helen and Bernadette discover through their research that the Candyman is being blamed for a series of brutal killings in another part of town. They investigate and eventually end up in over their heads.

Based on executive producer Clive

Barker's "The Forbidden," "Candyman" eventually falls into the typical blood-and-gore rut.

Although it has a couple "edge-of-your-seat" moments, it doesn't have the atmosphere or suspense needed for a psychological thriller.

In this, Madsen only pulls a run-of-the-mill performance out of her bag. However, any performer who is allergic to bee venom and allows bees to be poured all over her body definitely deserves some credit.

In the title role is Tony Todd (Worf's brother from "Star Trek: The Next Generation"). His character is somewhat menacing, but his time on screen is very limited. Fortunately, the Candyman doesn't plummet into the wisecracking abyss that many horror movie villains do.

What really helps this movie are the special make-up effects from Bob Keen, some terrific camera work and an eerie soundtrack from Philip Glass.

All things considered, the best time to get a taste of "Candyman" would be during a matinee showing.