

Nebraska Rep lending 'Tenor' to audiences

By Paula Lavigne
Staff Reporter

Six doors slamming in unison amid a chaotic flurry of people weaving on and off stage mixed with bellowing opera stars set the pitch for Ken Ludwig's "Lend Me a Tenor."

The first play in the Nebraska Repertory Theatre's Summer Season, "Lend Me a Tenor" is the story of singing bellboys, tranquilizers, silly slip-ups and mistaken identities juxtaposed against the formality of opera.

Directed by Kent Paul, a member of the national Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, the play brings a comic air to a hot summer evening.

Paul said the difference between a comedy such as "Lend Me a Tenor" and a tragedy lay in the style of presentation.

"They're quite different, particularly a comedy like this, which is almost a farce," he said. "It requires absolute clarity of movement and speed, which makes it almost like a dance."

He said both tragedy and comedy can have a certain degree of emotion and depth.

"What I'm after is as much humanity as you get in drama, but with the playful style you get in a comedy."

In the play, world-renowned tenor Tito Morelli (also known as "Il Stupendo") was coaxed by the Cleveland Grand Opera to perform Othello, his most acclaimed role. On their opening night, Morelli and the rest of the characters piece together a whole jigsaw puzzle of events.

Morelli accidentally takes a whole dose of tranquilizers, which, combined with the booze he's been drinking, causes him to pass out — leaving the manager to think he's dead.

The manager begins an endless search for someone to sneak into Morelli's place, and confusion erupts when the Othellos clash.

Kevin Paul Hofeditz, who plays Morelli, is an Actors' Equity Association performer. He said his character was quite an arrogant and proud man, yet very sweet.

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— Hofeditz
Actor

— 69 —

With a charismatic cast made up of Equity performers Henry Grossman, April Shawhan, Maryann Gibson and Michael Laswell with experienced actors Jonas Cohen, Geraldine Zinat and Crystal Rook, the play glows with talent.

Although Morelli's operatic Italian dialect was a challenge for Hofeditz, he said the true challenge rested in making the comedy work.

"The primary aspect of making comedy work is a sort of truthfulness," he said. "You need to have a high level of believability within the style."

Paying attention to the audience response and timing can be challenging in keeping the action going, Hofeditz said.

"You need to keep it moving because if everybody can stop and think about it too long, you'll lose the thread of it and the audience will say 'Yeah, but why doesn't he do this?' and 'Why doesn't she do that and that would fix everything?'" he said.

Paul said the audience would not have to interpret a hidden meaning in the action, nor know anything about opera.

"They should come in with a clean slate," he said.

"Lend Me a Tenor" opens tonight at 8 p.m. and runs over this and the next three weekends at 8 p.m. There are 3 p.m. matinees on June 19 and 26. Tickets are available at the box office for \$20 and \$17, and \$10 for students.



Courtesy of Twentieth Century Fox

Keanu Reeves stars as Jack Traven in "Speed."

'Speed' is fast on thrills

"Speed"



By Gerry Beltz
Staff Reporter

Adrenaline junkies beware! Going to see "Speed" may send you into an overdose!

Jan De Bont makes his directorial debut with "Speed" after serving as cinematographer on other monster hits such as "The Hunt for Red October," "Die Hard," and "Black Rain."

De Bont doesn't stray too far from what he already knows; "Speed" is full of white-knuckle stunts and wisecracking characters. However, he does try something different in that instead of a martial arts expert or musclebound robot in the lead, De Bont throws in Keanu Reeves, who is actually capable of looking like an adult without the need for facial hair.

Jack Traven (Reeves) and part-

ner Harry Temple (Jeff Daniels) manage to mess up the plans of Howard Payne (Dennis Hopper), an extortionist and electronics genius with a flair for blowing things up.

Everyone believes that Payne dies after the thwarted blackmail incident. However, he took things personally, and now plans on taking out his frustrations on Traven and the innocent passengers of a bus wired to explode after it hits 50 mph.

So, Traven catches up to the bus and (in a stunt that Reeves performed himself) jumps on board from a moving car to attempt to dismantle the bomb.

Saying that the film never slows down would be a lie. However, when "Speed" does slow down, it's at the right times, which is tricky to do in a film like this.

Credit does have to be given to Reeves. For someone that started out as Ted "Theodore" Logan in "Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure," he sure has come a long way. He does a great job as the action hero, but shouldn't try to make a career of it; all avenues

should be explored.

Dennis Hopper is also good as the villain Payne. He doesn't get a lot of screentime, but delivers a good performance. He's obviously psychotic (would Hopper be anything else?), and manages to evoke a laugh or two from the audience as well.

Sandra Bullock (Annie, who ends up driving the bus) has been in supporting role after supporting role ("Demolition Man", "The Vanishing"), but when does she get a starring role? Is she always going to be a second banana?

However, while the action and fun of the film would normally garner "Speed" a four star rating, the technical flaws (look for the rope that's towing the first bus) and drawn out ending cut it down half-a-star.

Go for the action, go for the camerawork, and go for the scene where Keanu Reeves is buzzing along an airport runway at 55 mph on the back of an oversized Matchbox car.

'Carousel' comes around as big winner at 1994 Tonys

NEW YORK (AP) - "Angels in America: Perestroika" was named best play while "Passion" beat out "Beauty and the Beast" for best musical. But the Broadway show that won more Tony Awards than any other — five — was a revival of the nearly 50-year-old musical "Carousel."

"Passion," the new Stephen Sondheim-James Lapine musical, received four Tonys on Sunday night, as did "An Inspector Calls," the revival of a J.B. Priestley play.

Playwright Tony Kushner's best-play award for "Perestroika" was his second in a row. He won last year for "Millennium Approaches," the first part of his "Angels in America" series about the politics and anguish of AIDS.

"Perestroika" won three Tonys altogether.

"Passion" won the hotly contested battle for best musical. Sondheim and Lapine won Tonys for best score and best book for a musical, respectively, and Donna Murphy was named best actress in a musical for her role in the Sondheim show as a 19th century woman caught in a love triangle.

Walt Disney's "Beauty and the Beast" managed only one prize. The costume-design award went to Ann Hould-Ward, who gradually turns humans into fantastical household objects as the musical proceeds.

The 48th Tony Awards ceremony seemed to celebrate revivals. Seventeen old shows opened on Broadway

during the season that ended May 31, compared to 20 new attractions.

Rodgers' and Hammerstein's "Carousel" beat them all, receiving Tonys for best musical revival; best featured actress, Audra Ann McDonald; best direction, Nicholas Hytner; best scenic design, Bob Crowley, and best choreography for the British Royal Ballet's Sir Kenneth MacMillan, doing his first musical. He died Oct. 29, 1992.

"An Inspector Calls," which describes the disintegration of a smug, wealthy family, won the award for best revival of a play. It received Tonys for featured actress in a play, Jane Adams; for direction, Stephen Daldry, and for lighting design, Rick Fisher.

Boyd Gaines, the giddily romantic hero of "She Loves Me," was chosen best actor in a musical.

Diana Rigg, who plays the title character in "Medea," was named best actress in a play.

"I shall carry this home, not only this, but the wonderful memories of American audiences and playing on Broadway," said Rigg, who is from England.

Stephen Spinella was chosen best actor for his portrayal of the AIDS-afflicted hero of "Perestroika," while the featured-actor Tony went to castmate Jeffrey Wright, who plays a male nurse.

Jarrod Emick, transformed from an old to a young ballplayer in "Damn

Yankees," won the Tony for best performance by a featured actor in a musical.

Jessica Tandy and husband-actor Hume Cronyn were the first recipients of a special Tony Award for lifetime achievement.

The Tony Awards are presented by the League of American Theaters and Producers and the American Theater Wing, which founded the prizes in 1947.

The winners were chosen by 687 theater professionals and journalists who voted by secret ballot. The nominees in 20 categories were selected by a 13-member panel appointed by the Tony Awards administration committee.