

the glassy eye



Mark Baldridge

Fall shows predictable, unoriginal

Well the new fall programs, touted for months in advance, are just beginning to trickle in.

The Fox network beat the "big three" to the punch Monday night with a flurry of back-to-back half-hours.

"Partners," at 8, delivers a glancing blow with a high-profile Jon Cryer as Bob — half of a San Francisco architectural "partner"-ship with Owen (Tate Donovan).

Everyone who has seen the ads knows the premise.

Bob and Owen are best friends. Then Owen gets engaged to Alicia (Maria Pitillo, "Natural Born Killers"), putting a strain on everyone. Think of it as a Platonic love triangle and you've got the idea.

Bob and Owen have known each other forever — and the humor of the show relies heavily on their cute "in jokes" — which will have to be re-invented every week unless the writers hit on something so miraculously catchy it actually catches on in the viewership at large.

Two zany best friends and the cute blonde — sound familiar?

Except that it isn't.

The Fox bigwigs thought, no doubt, that having one of the best friends sleep with the cute blonde would make a difference.

And maybe it does. But not, I think, in the way they had hoped.

One problem is that the only TV people that consistently "get some" are the pretty ones. This is a hard and fast rule of TV marketing wisdom and not to be questioned.

So one of the zany friends (Owen) has to be pretty. And being pretty means nothing if you're not cool.

So Owen was made cool. And they got a pretty cool guy to play him, too. Problem is, he's just not zany any more.

This leaves the frenetic Bob to carry the show — and it's obvious he's doing the work of two here. The writers love him. They just don't know what to do with either the phlegmatic Owen or the spunky Alicia. Not yet, anyway.

Prediction: Partnership dissolves. "Ned and Stacy" at 8:30 revolves around a far more traditional premise — how many TV shows feature Platonic boy/girl roomies? Must number in the hundreds.

For some reason it occurred to the producers to put them in a marriage of convenience this time around, and that, coupled with the generally poor writing, will probably doom the show.

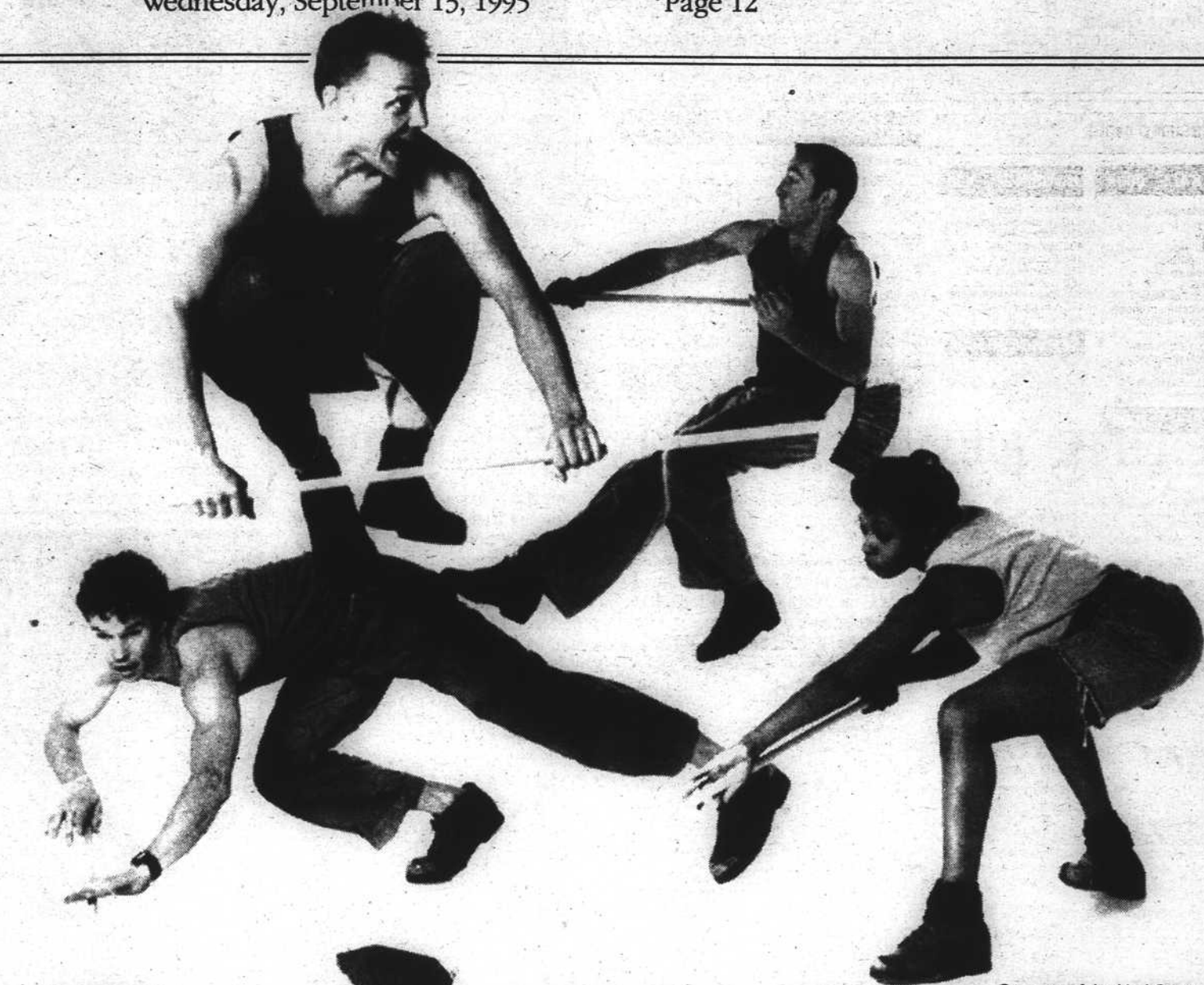
Too bad, too. Thomas Hayden Church ("Wings") is really excellent as Ned — a kind of Alex Keaton all grown up.

His timing and delivery are original and engaging.

And Diana Abandando almost overcomes her appallingly shallow dialogue.

Prediction: Will not outlast "Partners." Pity.

The Glassy Eye is a weekly column deconstructing television for entertainment purposes. Send ideas or suggestions to Mark Baldridge, c/o the Daily Nebraskan.



STOMP cast members, clockwise from left, Luke Cresswell, Carl Smith, Fiona Wilkes and Theseus Gerard. Courtesy of the Lied Center

STOMP

Percussion troupe sweeps into Lied

By Paula Lavigne
Senior Reporter

With their brooms, buckets and bandages, the STOMP cast may look like a Lied Center janitorial staff gone wild when they perform in Lincoln Thursday and Friday nights.

The traveling troupe of 11 performers uses dustbins, wood crates, plastic bags, boots, hub caps — basically everything, including, at times, the kitchen sink.

Their musical instruments don't come from velvet-lined cases. They come from cluttered garages, basements and tool sheds.

The bottom line — they make music. But it's not traditional music. STOMP has an experimental sound all its own.

And it's a sound that turned a 19-year-old student actor at New York University into a Broadway "STOMPer."

Ameenah Kaplan, now 21, was a member of STOMP's first American cast. The original cast and creators are from London.

Kaplan, who was studying experimental theater, saw a flier asking for "drummers who liked to jump around and dancers who liked to beat on things."

The concept fit with her experimental mindset, she said, because STOMP affects people on a different level than traditional theater.

"It strips away a lot of things that are put on

"You can pick up the bucket and play it in your hand, or you can play it like a congo."

AMEENAH KAPLAN

Member of original American STOMP cast

traditional theater now," she said. "It breaks it down into rudimentary or primary elements, which appeal to people who were used to a theater where things were so elaborate and 'showcasey.'"

When STOMP landed on Broadway, she said, it ushered in a refreshing change to the competing "Cats" and "Phantom of the Opera."

"In STOMP you've got eight people walking onto the stage with no makeup, dirty as all, and just with a broom," she said. "That really taps into a basic sense in people."

When the performers first take the stage, it may seem like everything is spontaneous and unplanned, she said, but hours of planned rehearsal will show through.

In some cases, though, performers are free to respond to the rhythm however they wish, she said, and the rhythm makers are free to throw a curve ball or two at the dancers.

The performers can respond with ease, she

said, because they're chosen for their multiple talents. Dancers are expected to be drummers, and drummers are expected to be dancers.

As a drummer, Kaplan said, she has her favorite instruments, including a pail with rivets on the side that sounds like a snare drum.

"You can pick up the bucket and play it in your hand, or you can play it like a congo," she said.

The performers also have "skirts" made out of bottomless big tubs strapped around the waist, she said, which make "beautiful bass sounds."

Although the performers have a myriad of objects, not just anything is thrown into the pot. Instruments are tested on a trial-and-error basis, Kaplan said, and some of them fail.

"Sometimes we get a sign that sounded just great when we first hit it," she said, "but after the first show it's dented so much it makes just a dull sound."

The Lincoln show will be Kaplan's first time on tour. She was with the New York cast since 1994.

Along with its Broadway run, STOMP has been seen on the "Late Show with David Letterman," "Good Morning America," "Dateline NBC," "Live! With Regis and Kathy Lee," and in Coca-Cola commercials.

STOMP runs Thursday and Friday at the Lied Center for Performing Arts. Show time both nights is 8, and tickets are \$26, \$22 and \$18 and half-price for students.