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472-1766
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See it, hear it, feel it; 'Tommy' is a success

■ The LCP's staging of the oft-revered rock
opera manages to look fresh and adhere to
the original's spirit at the same time.

BY PATRICK KELLY
Staff Writer

Ever since the British Invasion of
the 1960s the word has been shaken
by the music of The Who. The band's
body of work was too powerful to be
ignored. In 1969 The Who released
the rock opera "Tommy" and it mar-
ried the raw energy of rock music
with the classical elements of the the-
atre. This current production of
"Tommy" at the Lincoln Community
Playhouse attempts to recapture the
spirit of the original.

Pete Townshend's legendary
opera is about a boy named Tommy
who sees his father kill another man
in a jealous rage. From that moment
on, he is cut off from the world
around him. Tommy doesn't respond
to sight or sound and he never speaks
a word. The only way Tommy
expresses himself is through a pinball
machine.

The story showcases Tommy's
journey from helpless invalid to pop-
culture icon. Along the way Tommy
endures physical and psychological
abuse from his drunk uncle and his
deranged cousin. Once Tommy
becomes famous, those who abused
him become the first to profit from
Tommy. The opera deals with the
themes of exploitation and sensation-
alism.

The Lincoln Community
Playhouse's production was an ambi-
tious one. Putting on a show with as
much spectacle as "Tommy" is no
easy feat. The momentum of the play
was very quick and the play never
dragged for one moment. Characters
underwent costume changes and the
sets frequently changed within a mat-
ter of seconds. Unfortunately, many
of the scene changes required the
crew to walk out on the stage which
took away from the illusion.

The crew made good use of visu-
al and sound effects to illustrate
Tommy's amazing journey. Multi-
colored lighting and distorted sound
effects were a nice touch and gave the
play a psychedelic ambiance.

While the cast obviously
approached their performance with
vigor, the production on the whole
was very inconsistent. There were
musical numbers in which the actors
did not enunciate and deliver the
lyrics very clearly.

Although the singing could have
been improved, the dancing was quite
impressive. The cast moved with a
tight sense of rhythm and cohesion.
The credit for the dance numbers
goes to Karen Freimund-Wills who
was the production's choreographer.
Freimund-Wills also gave an inspired
performance as the Gypsy during the
number, "Acid Queen."

The title character was played by
three actors who portrayed Tommy in
various stages of his life. Jay Dupont
and Alec Sorensen played Tommy at
the ages of four and ten years old. The
two did a commendable job at con-
veying a lack of emotion even while
being literally thrown about on stage.
L. Evan Rail played Tommy as an
adult and also served as the show's
narrator.

The supporting cast was a strong
presence in the show. The most
notable members of the supporting
cast would be Joe Lee and Scott R.
Glen who play Cousin Kevin and
Uncle Ernie, two vile characters that
abuse Tommy in various ways. The
two did a good job at being particu-
larly malevolent.

Theatre review The Facts



What: Tommy

Stars: L. Evan Rail, Kristopher Filarski-
Wilson, Dave Jackson, Joe Lee, Scot
R. Glenn

Director: Robin Mc Kercher

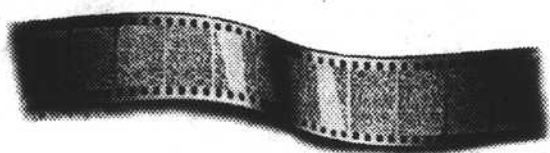
Grade: B-

The inherent danger in presenting
a show like "Tommy" is that it
instantly draws comparison to The
Who's original. Although this pro-
duction did have a competent rock
and roll orchestra there was no way
that they could capture the raw ener-
gy of The Who.

First of all, the volume level was
much lower than The Who's, who
went to great lengths to bombard
their audiences with sound. L. Evan
Rail's performance as Tommy was
passionate, but not nearly as charis-
matic as that of Roger Daltrey's. No
matter how many times the orches-
tra's guitar players would hit their
guitars with a windmill chop there
was no replacing Pete Townshend.

It is exciting that a work like
"Tommy" can be exhibited in a new
form. It is to the Lincoln Community
Playhouse's credit that they bring this
production to an audience who may
be unfamiliar with the world of rock.
However, it may be impossible to
capture the brilliant anarchy and
mayhem that comprised the original.

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