

Reviews

'Hedda Gabler' full of great acting

By Cray Pixley

ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

The Aggie Players' production of Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* moves the action from the playwright's native Norway to a post-Civil War city in the American South.

Cruel, manipulative comments drip off the lips of the protagonist like honey on a June afternoon.

Emma Reading, in the title role, plays Hedda as a repressed Southern belle fenced in by her social environment. The refined accent and charming exterior hide a dangerous woman.

Reading's Hedda is a newly married woman cornered in a powerless and hopeless future as a wife and mother.

Hedda's living is done vicariously through others in her bid to have control over their lives.

Her desire to shape a man's destiny ultimately destroys a former admirer, Elliot Loevborg, and then herself.

As Hedda, Reading gives a vivid performance in which every nuance of the character is brought forth.

She is at her best when violently showing a pin into the hat of her rival Mrs. Elvsted, played by Lanell Pena, or when firing her pistol out the garden door.

Her life is only temporarily brightened by making vicious remarks to virtually anyone with whom she comes in contact.

Hedda Gabler is a woman of violent emotions. She burns a masterwork manuscript, plays the piano with fury and pulls hair during her storm of feelings.

By her reputation, Hedda appears as a prize, adored and desired by all men.

However, she lives life feeling she has no power over anything or anyone and merely drifts through her existence.

Hedda's boredom is clearly revealed by her restless movements within scene designer Jimmy Humphries' impeccable drawing room set.

The attention to detail in Humphries' set fully transforms Rudder

Forum into a beautiful 19th century parlor. From the furniture to the miniature pictures on the walls, the scene is authentic.

The attractive surroundings belie the dark side of *Hedda Gabler*. The drawing room is the backdrop for all of Hedda's obsessions and repression.

The houselights are still up at the beginning of the second act when Hedda enters searching for something, anything, to occupy her time. The audience is given a peeping Tom perspective into Hedda's displeasure.

She investigates books, photo albums and walls before finding solace in shooting her father's old pistols.

The three men in Hedda's life are obstacles and tools in her grasp for power over someone.

Hedda's husband, George Tesman (Jonathan Burke), provides her with little, if any, entertainment.

Tesman spends the majority of his time caught between the pages of a new book or compiling research notes for his next stuffy book.

Burke is accomplished as the befuddled and sexually innocent scholar. His absent-minded professor's personality is no match for the excitement-thirsty Hedda.

Burke's Tesman is oblivious to the lecherous presence of Steven A. McCauley's Judge Brack.

The judge, full of sexual innuendo, is extremely interested in relieving Hedda's boredom in a manner she finds acceptable only if she remains in control.

McCauley's Brack is the only emotionally detached character who is aware of Hedda's marriage of displeasure. He is the sinister bystander prepared to capitalize on Hedda's disastrous dealings with her pawn, Elliot Loevborg.

Oliver Tull as Loevborg completes Hedda's triangle of men. Tull gives a measured performance as Tesman's rival scholar who puts both power and his life into Hedda's hands.

It is not giving anything away to say Hedda mishandles both. She



Photo by Ronnie Montgomery

Elliot Loevborg (Oliver Tull) confronts Hedda Gabler (Emma Reading) in last weekend's performance of *Hedda Gabler*.

fails to mold his destiny as she had envisioned, and as she perceives it, her life becomes worthless.

Hedda's role in Loevborg's death places a tighter fence around her. Her amoral conduct must be punished and Brack pushes Hedda to her limit.

Although *Hedda Gabler* would seem to provide for an unsettling night at the theater, and it does, the play did have a significant injection of humor.

Both Reading's stiff sarcasm and Burke's fumbles provided a false lightness that offset some of the horror of Hedda's actions.

That is what is terrifying about *Hedda Gabler*. Hedda destroys others and herself with a smile on her face.

Hedda Gabler continues March 2-4 at 8 p.m. in Rudder Forum. Tickets are available at Rudder Box Office for \$4 for students and senior citizens and \$5 for the general public.

Family turns junk into country museum

TRIMBLE, Mo. (AP) — It doesn't have a curator, a budget or board of directors. But what the Ma & Pa's Museum of Yesteryears lacks in polish and reputation, it makes up for in country charm.

Eugenia and Willis McIntosh have converted an old barn into a repository of memorabilia, collectibles and antiques, mostly their own, but some from friends, neighbors and relatives.

To a person who grew up early in this century, a stroll through the museum could be a trip down memory lane, past ice boxes and coal-burning cook stoves, hand-powered kitchen gadgets and farm tools.

"Having it all together... it brings back memories of things we had when we grew up," Eugenia McIntosh says.

From another perspective, the museum is the result of a lifetime of hoarding.

"It's stuff that we didn't take to the holler," Mrs. McIntosh says, referring to the hollow that was the rural dumping ground north of Plattsburg where both grew up.

"No, we don't throw anything away," she adds. "We hang on to everything. I threw away some stuff once and a week later I needed it. I went back to the holler and got it. I've never thrown anything away again."

The McIntoshes and their son, Gene, an inveterate collector, gathered it all under one roof and organized it into thematic groups. Each is identified by a handcrafted sign, such as "Pa's country store." That's in the loft, where a mannequin tends the cash register, a checkerboard game sits atop a pickle barrel and old-time products line the shelves.

Another group, "Ma's working tools," includes an old apple peeler, food grinder, cherry pitter, coleslaw

cutter, cream separator, milk strainer, butter churner, lemon squeezer, sorghum mill, hand-cranked cider mill and a rat trap.

Among "Pa's working tools" are a banding iron, corn sheller, lard press and a 7-foot-tall Keen Kutter tool cabinet full of Keen Kutter tools.

In "Yesteryear's recreation" are old-fashioned ice skates, fishing equipment, a tricycle, croquet set and well-worn baseball gloves and footballs.

Then there is a collection of Coca-Cola bottles, barbed wire, yardsticks, post cards, license plates, more than 500 mounted pens and pencils with advertisements from area businesses and whiskey decanters shaped like cats from Katz Drugs.

"We collect everything," Mrs. McIntosh says.

The McIntoshes, both 74 and life-

long residents of Clinton County, moved to Trimble in 1957. McIntosh is a carpenter and handyman for hire, and his wife was the school cook until she retired in 1984.

They opened the museum on Memorial Day 1985.

At that time Smithville Lake had just opened, and the 200 or so residents of Trimble, just west of the reservoir, expected a business and land value boom. It never materialized.

On Highway 169, north and south of town, the McIntoshes put up signs advertising the museum, but the Missouri Highway Department ordered them removed. One sign still stands within the city limits.

Attendance was good the first year but has dropped off since. A check of the guest book for 1988 showed about 150 visitors, some from as far as Fairbanks, Alaska.

Waco to purchase collection of Old West's famous weapons

WACO (AP) — The city of Waco is negotiating to buy some of the most famous guns that won the West.

Former banker and cotton broker Gaines de Graffenried, the unpaid curator of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum, is glad the collection may be kept intact.

"I knew I couldn't take it with me," de Graffenried told *The Dallas Morning News*.

About 75 percent to 80 percent of the 3,240 rare and historic guns and artifacts displayed in the city-owned Ranger museum are part of the collection owned by de Graffenried and his sons, Tommy and Flem, both of Houston.

Most of the other artifacts in the museum—including a Bowie knife and other Western weaponry—have been donated by people who fell victim to de Graffenried's good-ol'-boy charm, or his ability as a trader.

"I never found much stuff I wanted that I eventually didn't get a hold of," de Graffenried said, pointing to a 1920 saddle on display. "I stayed on that thing 20 years before I finally got it," he said.

"He's the only curator we've ever had, and we've never paid him anything," said former City Manager David Smith, who is negotiating the purchase of the guns. "He's acquired a lot of collections down there."

"We started looking at what belonged to him down there, and looking at Gaines' age and we thought, 'Now what are we going to do when Gaines is gone?'"

De Graffenried won't reveal his age, but admits to being more than 80.

Smith approached de Graffenried about having the city buy the

In a telephone interview from his Connecticut home, the collection's first appraiser, firearms authority Larry Wilson, described de Graffenried's collection as "most impressive" and "very important to the history of Texas and the Southwest."

Wilson had not totaled the

The most valuable appraised piece is a \$65,000 Colt revolver, one of the four 1847 Walker models now in the museum. Two sawed-off shotguns owned by outlaws Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow are (also) in the museum.

collection of guns, art and historical documents displayed in the museum. When the family agreed last summer to sell most—but not all—of their items in the museum, Smith took the proposal to Waco City Council.

Despite a murmur of dissent, the council voted to sell bonds to finance various capital improvements—and to provide up to \$1 million for purchasing the artifacts de Graffenried was willing to sell.

All that remains is settling on a price, to be negotiated after two expert appraisals of the guns and another appraisal of the art and other memorabilia. The first appraisal began in early January; the sale is expected to be completed by March.

Japanese go crazy over latest fad: fancy designer vegetable boutiques

TOKYO (AP) — Wait a minute. Cucumbers growing to the strains of Mozart? Eggplants in a boutique? Tomato as a name for a bank?

Only in Japan, where money flows freely for the latest fad.

"These are times of plenty, and lately we've been seeing customers looking for a change, something out of the ordinary," says Masashi Ozura, produce manager at a department store in Osaka, Japan.

"They want brand names, vegetables produced in a special way or of a special variety," Ozura says. He also says shoppers are willing to pay the price, which may be triple that for the garden variety.

So the department store, Umeda Hankyu, sells cucumbers and other vegetables that are organically grown and pampered with music.

"Mozart, Bach, and Vivaldi are what we usually play, but most classical music will do," says Yoshito Otani, a spokesman for the farm where the vegetables are grown in greenhouses rigged with record players.

Yoshihisa Tsuchiaki, owner of Kanesho, a vegetable boutique in Kyoto, says: "We thought it was about time for people to start discriminating between good vegetables and average vegetables."

Kanesho's produce, "Kyoyasai," is a sought-after brand, but Tsuchiaki says the produce owes most of its popularity to tradition.

"Kyoto is an ancient city with thousands of years of history," he says. "Vegetables raised here were

B.B. King's latest work obscures his blues skills

B.B. King
King of the Blues: 1989
MCA Records

*1/2
By Shane Hall

REVIEWER

When B.B. King wrote his biggest hit, "The Thrill is Gone," in 1970, he easily could have been describing the music he has recorded in the past decade.

King has long been acknowledged as the king of the blues. His very name is virtually synonymous with blues. His recordings of "The Thrill is Gone" and Lowell Fulson's "Everyday I Have the Blues," among others, are prime examples of his legacy.

Unfortunately, King's more recent efforts have not lived up to the standards of earlier accomplishments. During the 1980s, King has made a concerted effort to give his music a contemporary sound that will have broader appeal. Usually, that means conforming to this age of music by computers and other high-tech gadgets.

It is not to say that King can't use contemporary styles and deliver a good song. "When Love Comes to Town," his collaboration with U2, is a fine example. On that song, King stole the stage from Ireland's favorite musical sons. But "When Love Comes to Town," sadly, has been the exception rather than the rule.

King of the Blues: 1989, on MCA Records, is King's latest album and one of his worst.

On the 10-song album, he uses a formula that carries over onto most of the tracks: ballads with heavy use of synthesizers and drum machines, female back-up singers and occasional horn tracks. The result is less than satisfying.

"(You've Become a) Habit to Me," the album's first single, sets the pace for what is in store on

the remainder of the record. The song's use of electronic drums and funky bass lines is prominent.

Songs such as "Drowning In the Sea of Love" and "Go On" are examples of the ballad form. Not even the work of guest musicians Al Kooper (who also produced some of the songs) and Bonnie Raitt can save them.

The worst, song, however, is "Change In Your Lovin'," on which the electronics are so over-used that one suspects King is trying to get a song into the dance clubs. His blues roots are all but obscured.

"Business With My Baby Tonight" and "Standing On the Edge" are little more than tolerable. Here, King's musical roots are more apparent. "Business..." features a full horn section that includes Alan Rubin and Lou Marini (a member of the Blues Brothers band) and makes for a listenable, but far from great, piece of modern rhythm and blues.

"Standing..." uses another respected horn player, jazz saxophonist Tom Scott, and King plucks some bluesy licks on his beloved guitar, Lucille. Aside from these and one or two other songs, *King of the Blues: 1989* is a lackluster effort.

Modern musical technology is not something that cannot be used effectively in rhythm and blues music. Malaco Records, based in Mississippi, is a blues label that has released albums making use of synthesizers.

Many Malaco recordings have even used string sections. The results have often been pleasing. The artists on Malaco, however, are trying to make rhythm and blues music. This is what distinguishes their work from King's on this album.

Unfortunately, *King of the Blues: 1989* demonstrates that B.B. King is not what the album's title claims.



Advertisement for 'HEY AGS!' featuring a stylized logo with 'LONDON' on the left and 'PARIS' on the right. The text reads: 'Want to meet new people and see new places -- and have a blast at the same time??? Then travel w/ALSG to Europe this summer! 8 day trip leave in May, June, July. For all the inf. call Coy Kouba @ 260-5996'.