

'Blithe Spirit' cast conjures up stylish, sophisticated production

By Cray Pixley

Of The Battalion Staff

The Aggie Players production of Noel Coward's "Blithe Spirit" currently playing in Rudder Forum is a smart, stylish and wonderfully funny show.

Coward's comedic farce concerns the mishaps that occur after English novelist Charles Condomine invites an inept medium, Madame Arcati, to hold a seance in his home so that he may collect first-hand material for a novel he is writing. Through Arcati's bumbling, Charles' dead first wife, Elvira, appears on the scene to cause havoc for Charles and his present wife, Ruth.

Coward's comedy is full of crisp British wit, and the cast handles the usually breathless wit admirably. The sarcasm and barbs flow off of Charles (Jon Burke), Ruth (Ginny Green) and Elvira's (Sara Waak) tongues as if they were simply making mild comments about the state of the English weather.

Director Michael Greenwald has developed the actors' ability to convincingly produce nearly flawless British accents. Without this talent, "Blithe Spirit" would hardly work for the Aggie Players. But it works, and it does so quite well.

Set designer Jimmy Humphries has given "Blithe Spirit" a cozy English country house living room in which to serve out the action. It is comfortably cluttered with shawl-draped tables, chairs, piano and desk. Some components of the room spring to life with the aid of petulant ghosts.

The cast also comfortably conquers the '20s setting clothed in costume designer Susan Kelly's wonderful concoctions. The designs evoke the atmosphere, and also help the ghosts float through the show while keeping mortals rooted in the English soil. Elvira and Ruth have flowing, other-worldly dresses, while Charles is grounded in lounging jackets and proper country suits.

There is fine work from the principal actors.

Burke is subtly intense as the harried Charles, pestered by both wives. He is frantic when first presented with Elvira's return and his wife's jealousies. The next moment he is reveling in the situation.

Green's Ruth is an uptight creation. She is somewhat dubious at Elvira's spiritual existence and when she finally believes in the ghostly presence she takes steps to rid them of her rival. Green plays Ruth with a vinegar flavor and a set jaw. She wants none of Charles and Elvira's nonsense. Her spirited exchanges with Burke are high moments in the show.

Elvira is played by Waak as a mischievous seductress. Waak's mannerisms and speech are reminiscent of a youthful Katherine Hepburn. She delights in tormenting Charles and Ruth. It is Charles' conversations with the mostly "invisible" ectoplasm Elvira that fuel Ruth's anger and the audience's delight.

Mary Ellen Brennan's wildly eccentric Arcati is a joy. She is even more odd than the long-dead Elvira. The ghosts are quite normal compared with Arcati, who flits around the room singing strange songs to her "control." Daphne and often flies into gurgling trances. Brennan as Arcati is completely and enjoyably bizarre.

Although she has brief stage time, Jessica Lowe as the Condomine's flighty maid Edith is an enormous credit to "Blithe Spirit." Lowe races through the living room on errands like a scared rabbit. Edith is the key to the appearance of the ghosts, and Lowe's performance is remarkable. She makes the most of her stage time and completely charms the audience with her performance of the dimwitted maid.

John Mabry as the phlegmatic Dr. Bradman and Amy Jimenez as his talkative wife are pleasing characters involved in the seance and offer one more reason to see this wonderful play.

"Blithe Spirit," a comedy of ghosts and cutting repartee will continue at 8 p.m., Nov. 15-18. Tickets are available at the MSC Box Office. Prices are \$4 for students and \$5 for the general public. For more information contact the Box Office at 845-1234.

Restless Heart performs tight, entertaining show

Baillie and the Boys shine as opener



Photo by Phelan M. Ebenhack

Larry Stewart, lead singer for Restless Heart, performs Friday in G. Rollie White Coliseum. Asleep at the Wheel and Baillie and the Boys also performed.

By John Righter

Of The Battalion Staff

"What we play is country, it's rock, it's country rock. It's just American and that's why we're here."

Having backed up those words for the past hour and a half, lead singer Larry Stewart and his group Restless Heart closed out a three-and-a-half-hour country jam along with openers Asleep At The Wheel and Baillie and the Boys in G. Rollie White Friday night.

To put it mildly, Friday night's excursion into hicksville, a place quite unfamiliar to me, was very interesting, if not enjoyable. Country fans provide a unique contrast to their rock counterparts.

For instance, there wasn't a wild mob scene when Larry Stewart jumped off the stage and walked into the crowd, shaking all out-reaching hands. There weren't any mad stage rushes, no spastic pushing, no silly pogoing, not even a single stage dive. And there weren't any security guards, for God's sake!

Who are these country music fans? And don't they know that concerts are meant for getting wasted and pandering to a bunch of pretentious, snot-nosed jerks while massacring your neighbor. I don't know. I'm just really confused by this idea of having good, wholesome fun at a concert.

And good, wholesome fun is exactly what took place. The screaming attitudes and self-righteous preaching characteristic of rock audiences were not once visible Friday. It's easy

to say that everyone in attendance left happy and hipper at night's end. For most, criticism would be unthinkable, unnecessary. Unfortunately, criticism is my job.

But hey, I enjoyed most of the evening! Especially, when I woke up after Asleep At The Wheel finished their 40-minute set. I'm sorry, but I can't even begin to relate to their "Good Ole Boy," old-fashioned swing to a country twang. Violinist Larry Franklin and pedal-steel guitarist John Ely were highlights, especially during Franklin's "Texas Fiddle Man," but the rest of the seven-piece band left much to be desired. It all smelled too much like the country pasture for me.

Newcomers Baillie and the Boys followed Dead On The Road, and immediately improved the evening. I admit that beforehand I was completely ignorant of Baillie and the Boys, but with their first song I was impressed with Kathie Baillie's charm and confidence, and husband Michael Bonagura's quality, yet unpretentious, guitar playing. In fact, one of the night's highlights was Bonagura's acoustic interlude on "I Can't Turn The Tide."

Equally enjoyable were the razor sharp "She Deserves You," a song that judges the divorce of Baillie's sister (she introduced it by saying "Thank you for not hating me for singing this"), and the fun rockin' "Lovin' By Numbers," both off Turn The Tide. Providing that same tough, concerned approach characteristic of Rosanne Cash, Baillie bent beyond catchy melodies and hokey riffs, combining with husband Mi-

chael to showcase a tight and talented, yet quite diverse outfit that definitely was impressive.

Of course, all this only set up the night's main event. Restless Heart is just a few changed parts and a little fine tuning from being a first-class live country band. But first the five-some needs to ditch the ridiculous Michael Jackson intro, complete with fog, lights and epic sci-fi score. (It seemed preposterously lame when you finally broke from this mounting tension to see a couple of guys in cowboy hats and jeans do a mellow country single.) Also, they need to put an end to David Innis' (keyboards) half-time rump show (even George Strait doesn't lower himself to such blatant spectacles) and cut out the needless reprisals of songs that should be over when they're finished, not pointlessly revisited three songs later.

But that's really just nitpicking, because for most of the 17-song set, the band beautifully interchanged from fast to slow, from upbeat to sentimental, and from comically loose to lock-jaw tight. While never feeling cheated, you realized that the band was having a good time as much for themselves as they were for the audience.

Restless Heart opened with "Big Dreams In A Small Town," the title track and first single from their last album, before sweeping through songs from their *Wheels* and debut albums. Highlighting the first half of

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Fabulous

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waste his ability on the Baker cocktail act. He only seems to play with his brother so Frank can support his family. Before Susie joined the Baker Boys, she was content to live off her good looks as an escort and borderline prostitute. Frank already has his dreams because he has a family.

Susie forces Jack to realize he might want to pursue real music (jazz) and do more with his life. Perhaps Jack and Susie don't want to be alone either. However, their affair is

cold because they both have a chip on their shoulder.

The conflicts are compelling: Should Jack leave his brother to play jazz? Will Frank be able to survive with or without his brother? Can Susie and Jack allow themselves to care for one another?

Director/writer Steve Kloves concentrates on the three main characters. He gives plenty of screen time (forgetting plot development) to Pfeiffer performing with the Baker Boys. It's a smart move. Pfeiffer dominates the screen and is engaging. Her finest moment was performing the song "Makin' Whoopee" on top of a grand piano. Her

moves were slick and her voice was grand.

However, the performances of Jeff and Beau Bridges as the Baker brothers was the best part of this film. Being brothers in real life may have made their jobs easier, but they really did act like brothers. Further, Jeff Bridges portrayal of the introspective Jack was a fascinating character study, and Beau Bridges was sensitive, real, and funny as Frank.

The music is loaded with great jazz, including music by Duke Ellington. The characters are real, and the story is honest and original. "The Fabulous Baker Boys" is a wonderful example of a film with style as well as substance.

Recycle

(Continued from page 4)

lawn chairs and window frames.

Recycled plastic is used for such things as flowerpots and fiber-filling in jackets and pillows. Paper can be recycled as game boards, record jackets, egg cartons, 50 percent of grocery-store food boxes, book covers, gift boxes and jigsaw puzzles. Ninety percent of recycled glass is used to make new bottles. It can also be used in making bricks and tile.

Jo An Sebesta, assistant executive director at Twin City Mission, said recycling gives volunteers at the Mission a sense of purpose while contributing to the cleanliness of their surroundings. Many of the volunteers are less fortunate (such as the poor or homeless), but eagerly pick up roadside litter in small groups.

"Cleaning up and recycling helps us to keep cans, glass and paper off the streets and keeps us on our reha-

bitative programs," Sebesta said. Mission volunteers bale 960 pounds of cardboard before sending the truckload to Waco to be recycled.

The Misson also makes house calls.

"We constantly urge people to call us so we can pick up their cardboard," she said.

Sebesta said her job is a rewarding one. "I've been here 13 years, and you have to love your job or you wouldn't stay," she explained. "Sometimes I go home and am so tired, but then the next morning I wake up knowing my job allows me to help the community and our volunteers in some way. It's so rewarding to see people who have problems contributing for the betterment of the city."

Scott Coles, a Texas A&M senior and co-president of Texas Environmental Action Coalition, said the success of our maintaining a clean environment depends on people of all generations getting involved in recycling.

"The education of adults and especially our younger generation is crucial if we want our waste situation

to improve," Coles said. "The success of any community program depends on it."

Other local recycling stations include:

- Brazos Animal Shelter (for bundled or tied newspapers).
- Brazos Beverages Inc. in Bryan (for aluminum cans only).
- Bruegging Paper Stock in Bryan (for clean, rigid plastic, all grades of paper, aluminum cans and glass bottles).
- City of College Station Solid Waste Department (for waste oil and used automobile batteries).
- The Deluxe Burger Bar at Northgate (for glass, aluminum, newspapers and cardboard).
- Friends of the Library in Bryan (for magazines and book donations).
- Madison Metals in Bryan (for copper, brass, alloys, steel, stainless steel, cast iron, old cars, structural steel, car batteries and aluminum that is not from soda cans).
- Oxbow Industries in Bryan (for newspaper and computer paper).
- Valley Recyclers in Bryan (for aluminum cans and color-sorted glass).

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