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Thurber's Carnival: Fables, Folly and Farce at Eastern

By WALTER LAZENBY

CHARLESTON — Material from the pen of one of America's greatest humorists, arranged in revue format, graces the Playroom stage as Eastern's first offering of the new theatre season.

It is "A Thurber Carnival," directed by Donna Shehorn and performed by nine university actors. Final presentations are tonight and tomorrow afternoon.

Material on the program ranges from the farcical "Gentlemen Shoppers" (off on a spree) to the sedate "The Last Flower," which suggests human capacity for renewal even after destruction brought on by human folly.

It includes three of the

popular "Fables of Our Time"; a well-known story, "The Night the Bed Fell," delivered as a monologue by Patrick Richardson; and one of the delicious episodes from "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty." In the latter Richardson is at his best.

A Review

In the latter, too, Thurber's irrepressible anti-feminist sentiments echo material from two other skits, "The Unicorn in the Garden" and "Mr. Preble Gets Rid of His Wife." Both depict shrewish wives and both depend on unexpected tur-

nabouts for their effects. I found the Preble story the most effectively staged and Scott Stanley and Katie Sullivan delightful as Mr. and Mrs. Preble.

For my taste, the most rib-tickling material comes in "Macbeth Murder Mystery" and "Take Her Up Tenderly." The first-named is built on the idea of a mystery buff accidentally taking up Shakespeare's play and giving it a hilarious and unheard-of interpretation as a murder mystery.

Her verdict: MacDuff "done it," and Macbeth's feigned (!) visions of Banquo's ghost was his attempt to protect Lady Macbeth, whom he thought guilty, while Lady Macbeth's

sleep-walking caper was her ruse to protect him!

In "Take Her Up Tenderly," a misguided anthologist decides, with his cohorts, to doctor some famous English poems by taking the sadness and unpleasantness out and putting some sexiness in, with ghastly success.

Jack Pierson and Anne O'Meara exhibit the greatest versatility in their assignments, but the others — Kurt Rhoads, Scott Zimmerman, Teri McClure, and Julie Woosley — necessarily show variety, too. And Woosley should consider doing an impression of the late Gracie Allen — her voice at times sounds uncannily familiar!

A carnival indeed.

Saturday 25 September 1976