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A Review

'Lark' Production Is Eye-Pleasing

By WALTER LAZENBY

CHARLESTON—Jean Anouilh's "The Lark" will again take the stage at Eastern's University Theatre this weekend, with performances scheduled for 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday.

This modern reworking of the Joan of Arc story, as adapted by Lillian Hellman, of course holds no surprises for students of history, not will it surprise drama buffs who know G.B. Shaw's "Saint Joan" or Maxwell Anderson's "Joan of Lorraine."

What will be of interest is Anouilh's treatment of the famous Maid. Shaw, in realistic style, presents her story as an event produced by forces working behind history toward the Reformation, and Anderson uses the play-within-the-play device to bring out its relevance to a troupe of modern actors.

But Anouilh, lacking Shaw's witty and profundity and Anderson's cute earnestness, retells Joan's legend as treatrical ritual, an ironic pageant in which some characters self-consciously speak of how later ages will regard them and their deeds. He does not try to fathom the mystery of her achievement.

Instead, within the framework of a rather static trial scene, he sketches a few episodes leading up to the execution. While doing so he presents what seems to be the "message" of the play in a contrast between two views of the "Natural Man"—Joan's and the Inquisitor's.

Because the playwright structures the events as a replay of another time, another place, the audience must feel detachment and misses tragic involvement. He averts the actual catastrophe of Joan's burning at the stake by wrenching events out of sequence and closing the play happily with her triumph at the Dauphin's coronation. As one character says, "The true story of Joan is the story of her happiest day."

there are times when the eye becomes slightly restless, it is because Anouilh required the priests to sit so long on the judge's bench.

Among the cast are able performers, in both major and minor roles. Anne Shapland's portrayal of Joan succeeds handily in the moments when Joan's enthusiasm or endurance must come through, less well when a simple peasant girl's naivete is being conveyed.

B.J. Heft gives a polished performance as Charles, the Dauphin. With considerable vocal variety and control of gesture and stance, he maintains a convincing image of the weak, if overly effeminate, king-to-be. The confrontation between Joan and Charles in Act One is quite charming.

Linda Rosenthal exhibits mature grace in the brief role of Charles's mistress. As Robert de Beaudricourt,

Robert Armstrong acts with obvious relish and in sustaining character surpasses his role as Sir Toby Belch last fall. And no doubt patrons will find commendable touches in other roles: Jim Kleckner's manly Warwick, for instance, or Bob Dodd's mature Couchon, or Michael Vassen's intense Promoter, or Jon Malkovich's haughty Inquisitor, or Michael Welsh's Archbishop, or Jane Dierck's Queen Yolande.

The Eastern production is an eye-pleasing one, with Nancy Paule's workable and aesthetically satisfying set and John Keough's bright costumes—especially the elaborate headdresses of the ladies at the France court. Director Gerald Sullivan has created interesting groupings of a rather large cast and two really impressive tableaux in the show's final minutes. If