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Saturday 9 November 1974

# 'People of Notes' Opera Presents Range of Moods From Three Centuries

By WALTER LAZENBY

CHARLESTON — "People of Notes," a musical theatre workshop production, will parade its scenes from opera across the stage of Dvorak Concert Hall tonight for the last time.

Those who tend to shy away from operatic performances because of the foreign language barrier will find this show no more difficult to understand than a Broadway musical, for it is sung in English throughout.

Furthermore, it is made up of selections based on familiar stories (like "Cinderella") or containing delightfully familiar music (like "The Toreador Song") or displaying obvious entertainment value (for example, the antics of circus performers rehearsing routines).

Director June Johnson of Eastern's Musical Performance Department chose five of her favorites and happily managed to include a wide range of moods and to represent three centuries of opera. She selected some musically important pieces as well: Mozart's "The Magic

Flute," one of his compositions which vastly influenced later development of comic opera; and Bizet's "Carmen," reputed to be fascinating to inexperienced

## A Review

listeners and tirelessly appealing to musical sophisticates.

A lightly satirical tone comes through in the selection from Rossini's "La Cenerentola" in the portrayal of the two vain sisters; tender sentiment and nostalgia dominate Copland's "The Tender Land"; and in "Carmen" passion—Carmen's for Escamillo—flares up. The selections from Smetana's "The Bartered Bride" and from "The Magic Flute" are comic.

Jack Rang of the Theatre Department assisted with staging. The result is a satisfying blend of theatre and music, the singers acting commendably, by and large.

The Rossini, the Smetana,

and the Bizet seem the best staged; and that's saying something, considering that the latter two offer the challenge of crowds to be arranged and maneuvered onstage, as well as to be occupied with dancing, performing tricks, etc. As an excerpt, the Copland selection is disappointingly lacking in coherence.

Kathy Davis takes several roles and gives lively and competent performances as Clorinda and Frasquita. The dark, rich coloration of Lynn Harpring's voice seems very appropriate to her portrayal of the sultry beauty, Carmen. David Little, taking bass roles, demonstrates good phrasing and control.

Terry Kelly, whose voice is always pleasing, does an extremely fine job of handling Vaske's role, especially his musical stuttering. But one might quarrel with his serious interpretation of the village booby: he makes the character very sympathetic, hence not so comic as he would appear in a performance of the complete opera.

I might add that the hearty Chorus sounds good, too.