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'She Stoops to Conquer' Yields Full Harvest of Comical Ironies

By WALTER LAZENBY

The comical mistakes of a night, embodied in a classic eighteenth century play by Oliver Goldsmith and presented in modified interpreters' theatre format, are closing out Eastern's 1973-74 theatrical season, with performances at 8 p.m. tonight and tomorrow night and at 2 p.m. on Sunday.

This production of "She Stoops to Conquer" also inaugurates a remodeled performance hall and marks the directing debut of Mary Ruth Rang, of the Theatre faculty.

The script brings to a happy conclusion two love stories and a story about the belated coming-of-age of a young country squire given to pranks. In it both intentional and unintentional misunderstandings yield a full harvest of delicious comic ironies in numerous scenes.

It also presents a distinct challenge to actors in its language and rhetorical

complexity. Goldsmith's elegant sentences must come trippingly from the tongue.

To lessen the difficulties both of actors' delivery and of conveying the point rapidly to the audience, the director has

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judiciously cut most of the topical allusions. Gone too is much of the purely farcical matter in the alehouse scene.

In the style chosen there is a compromise between the demands of a fully staged performance and those of a reading performance. Here the actors, through stage movement and stage business, create so nearly a complete illusion of an action happening now that their looking out into the audience—as would be appropriate for a conventional interpreters' theatre rendering—is occasionally distracting. The

action is staged simply against a background of black curtains, with a minimum of furniture and props.

The show has a very intelligent cast. If any of them err, it is in the direction of letting their intelligence show.

It is understandably difficult for a sophisticated and intelligent young actor, with crisp articulation, to portray a dolt. B.J. Heft, who has had experience in several major productions, has been faced with this task. He is credible in the role of Tony Lumpkin, but certainly more intelligent than unusual.

Janet Lamos has the most demanding role, that of Mrs. Hardcastle, who combines a noticeable vanity with a seemingly selfless concern for the welfare of her son Tony. Miss Lamos evidently understands the role well; but only in the reading of the intercepted letter does she convey the irrationality of the aroused dragoness that Mrs. Hardcastle can be.

Responsibility for keeping

the pace of the show snappy largely rests with Kris Kirkham, as Kate Hardcastle, and Michael Boyll, as Mr. Hardcastle. The vivacious Miss Kirkham gives polished and melodic utterance to Kate's lines, even if it requires breathing at calculated intervals, as a singer must. Boyll picks up cues in a timely fashion and uses sustained and convincing gestures.

It is mildly unfortunate that the voices of Keith Lustig (Hastings) and Gary Ambler (Marlow) are so closely matched in quality. But both are convincing in their portrayals, and Ambler's accomplished imitation of stuttering deserves special commendation.

Jon Malkovich develops his role as Sir Charles by lowering his voice to achieve a more mature characterization.

Nancy Bitters gives her most accomplished performance to date on an Eastern stage, and James Dowling is humorous as Diggory.