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Walter Lazenby

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'Best of Broadway' Nostalgic Gem

By WALTER LAZENBY

CHARLESTON—No one can deny the appropriateness of the label borne by the Eastern Music Theatre Workshop's current production, which will be seen again tonight and tomorrow night at 8 p.m.

Called the "Best of Broadway," the show includes gems from the American musical theatre dating back to the Twenties, embedded in an unobtrusive framework of commentary.

One can only object that two hours is not enough time to sample all the favorites and show-stoppers from so many years of theatrical history. The presence of certain numbers, like "I Want to Be Happy" from "No, No, Nanette," may make one wish

for "Tea for Two" from the same show. Or the inclusion of only one Cole Porter song, and that not his best, may give

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rise to an overpowering nostalgic wish to hear more of those sophisticated Porter lyrics.

As it is there is charm on every hand in what the show does include. Numbers like "Sue Me" and "Marry the Man Today" from "Guys and Dolls" entertain because they immediately evoke the heartache and dilemmas of the original dramatic situation in which they were

first created—and they are clever.

"Only a Rose," and "People Will Say We're in Love" retain their perennial appeal as love songs and add a romantic balance to the show.

Perhaps most delightful of all, the numbers from "Little Mary Sunshine" which parody some of the most tasteless moments in the Friml operettas guard against taking the nostalgia craze too seriously. "Colorado Sky," aided in performance immeasurably by Becky Stuckey's mobile eyelashes, and "Once in a Blue Moon," well acted by Kathy Gray and Dale Furry, are wise inclusions.

Gershwin is represented by "Bess, You is My Woman," from "Porgy and Bess,"

which was warmly and deservedly applauded in the opening night's performance.

There is even a women's liberation twist to the rendition of "Stouthearted Men," the old standby for male choruses.

The voices are on the whole delightful too. Kathy Gray's, Rachelle D'Andrea's, and Debbie Gaule's seem especially well suited to the numbers they render; and Donald Stratton's is well-trained and mature.

In mentioning these thoroughly pleasing details from the performance, I have included only material from the first half of the show. In the second half, which an early deadline prevented me from seeing, there are bound to be others.