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Monday, Oct 30, 2006

Opinion XML

Posted on Fri, Oct. 13, 2006

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MO DICKENS ON MUSICAL THEATER HERITAGE

Troupe was refreshing asset to Belger Arts Center AS I SEE IT

By Mo Dickens

As gallery assistant of the Belger Arts Center, I have had the pleasure of working with a very dedicated group of Kansas City theater professionals, the Musical Theater Heritage.



Dickens

Musical Theater Heritage has produced about a dozen musicals on the loading dock of the Belger Cartage Service building since 2003. "The Music's the Thing," should be their motto.

I often tell visitors about the night I took an artist from South Korea to see "Guys and Dolls" in our garage.

Before the play, I drove this young woman around Kansas City, pointing out the Avenue of the Arts, Bartle Hall, the steeple of light that projects from Community Christian Church and other local art works.

As we drove around I mentioned the Heritage production that night. Jiyoung Chung had never seen a musical before so we headed to the Crossroads. I could tell by her laughing and clapping (and even dancing during "Sit Down, You're Rocking the Boat") that she enjoyed every minute of it.

When the play ended, I introduced her to a couple of staffers who were standing on the sidewalk in front of the Belger building.

Jiyoung told them how much she loved the show and then told me, "When I return to Seoul I will boast to friends that I saw a wonderful play in a city full of art!" Her fists were raised and she was grinning from ear to ear. The Western Auto sign was lighting the street.

It was one of my favorite Kansas City moments.

This fall will mark the end of the relationship between the Belger Arts Center and the Musical Theater Heritage. Later this month "Into The Woods" will be the last production at the Belger.

We're converting our garage and loading dock into exhibition space so we can display large sculptural pieces. The Musical Theater Heritage is moving a couple of blocks away to Crown Center for their 2007 season.

Their new space probably won't feature train noises from the adjoining tracks, or a squeaky gas meter or an umbrella cockatoo that calls down from the second floor.

It probably won't have a truck washing bay right behind the stage or block and tackle for lifting truck engines hanging over the audience member's heads.

But even without all those fancy extras, we're sure they will do just fine. They are a top quality troupe that chooses high quality musicals, and we wish them well. We'll miss them and their audiences.

Mo Dickens is gallery assistant at the Belger Arts Center. He lives in Kansas City.

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