Play Reviews

Darwin Seed
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PLAY REVIEWS


A humorous play to be sure, but not exactly one with universal appeal. This is a play written by Texans about Texans for Texans. The gist of it is that it is a series of seven plays and one short story of the colonization of Texas, 1821 to 1836. Funny, entertaining and informative, but comes off like something by the Texas Chamber of Commerce. I think, however, that this collection of plays would be good to be performed by anyone from grade school, junior high, high school and adults to be performed for an equally wide range of ages.—Darwin Seed


"The Sultan, bewitched by a magic scimitar, decrees that he will marry a new bride every evening and chop off her head the next morning. To save her pretty neck, clever Scheherazade tells her husband an enchanting tale which isn't quite completed by the dawn's early light. So he postpones the execution a day. Scheherazade keeps up this parade of stories for a thousand and one nights, finally winning the Sultan away from the scimitar's evil spell."

The author has playfully mixed Arabian cliches with modern figures of speech in the retelling of five Tales from the Arabian Nights interwoven with the Scheherazade story. Told in story-theatre form, this play with music can be performed with as few as six to eight actors or as many as twenty-five. Costumes are simple Arabian clothing with additive pieces. The sets, props and special effects can be simple or elaborate.

Overall, this play would be a fun challenge for 9th graders through adults to perform. It is excellent to take on tours to the upper elementary grades. Some of the modern cliches may have to be updated. The music was not available for review.—Dianne Breinholt


Sherlock Holmes is on the move again with his dear Watson and the Baker Street Irregulars solving the mystery of Lady Dither's ghost which turns out not to be a ghost after all. Jewels, Africa, an ancient butler, the imposter Violet and of course, Lady Dither help to round out the story along with the supposedly haunted castle.
Set in Victorian England, the dialogue moves along quite nicely until we come to some of the ho-hum explanations of Dither, Holmes and Watson.

The music doesn't really add to the production, it mainly detracts. Though some of the lyrics for Holmes and Watson are quite good, the music on the whole appears to need a little more dash, maybe some up-tempo tunes. If you're looking for a catchy tune you won't find it. Every song is slow and sluggish.

This play could have possibilities if the music were cut and the mystery from the lyrics were left in.—Meryl E. Perry


I was rather disappointed in this play. I had come to believe that Tim Kelly had the formula for melodrama; he made melodrama corny, yet likeable. The jokes are always coming a mile a minute while they move forward the plot, but not so in this one. Yes, there are plenty of puns, plays on names and asides to the audience, but the jokes can't beef up the thin plot. I felt belabored by the story line, and I didn't really care for the characters, heros or villians; it seemed that no one played the lead.

My recommendations for this play would be for junior high students to exercise delivery, because the jokes are good and timing is essential. If it is performed, it should be performed for peers. But, if it's melodrama you want, try any assortment of Tim Kelly's other melodramas. The ones I've read in the past, I've really enjoyed.—Erin Caldwell


*The Five Rings* is the story of a young Olympic hopeful attending summer training at Sierra Valley Olympic Camp. This is an entertaining, musical comedy. I can say that because it made me feel good and I was entertained. The story is focused (although somewhat dispersedly) on a jock-hating female reporter on her first assignment with the TIMES, and the handsome owner of the camp. The characters are interesting. Although some of them are stock, but overall they are appealing. I feel all ages, except for the very young, would enjoy it. It is, however, best performed by junior high and older.—Darwin Seed


Nicholas, a ten to twelve-year-old boy, spends summers with his grandparents. This summer, he quickly notices that his grandfather, Matthew, is getting short-tempered and forgetful. After a few days, Matthew agrees to help Nicholas with his summer science project—counting the stars. He tells Nicholas a story of a dragon that guards the stars. If the stars fall to earth, it will become a paradise with no more unhappiness or death. As the summer progresses, Nicholas discovers that Matthew is dying and starts off to slay the dragon and return the stars to earth. In the end, Nicholas comes to a better understanding of himself, his grandfather and others.
This play is well written. The author has captured the frustrations of both youth and old age. I found myself easily identifying with all four characters.

The setting is simple and special effects can be added. Skilled actors are highly recommended, including three for the dragon.--Dianne Breinholt