

Can you believe it? Seventeen architecture students actually agreed on something! In this case it's the design of the set to be used for the University's May production of Leonard Bernstein's "Mass."

Speaking of which, between 75 and 100 voices are needed for a "Mass" standing choir. Anyone who has participated in choirs in the past is invited to join the standing choir either by filling out an application at the School of Music office or by calling 686-3793 and having your application completed by phone. No auditions will be held! And University students may arrange to obtain two spring term credits.

Rehearsals will be Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 7-9:20 p.m. in music school Room 202, starting April 3. Additional questions may be directed to Dan Sachs, 686-3793.

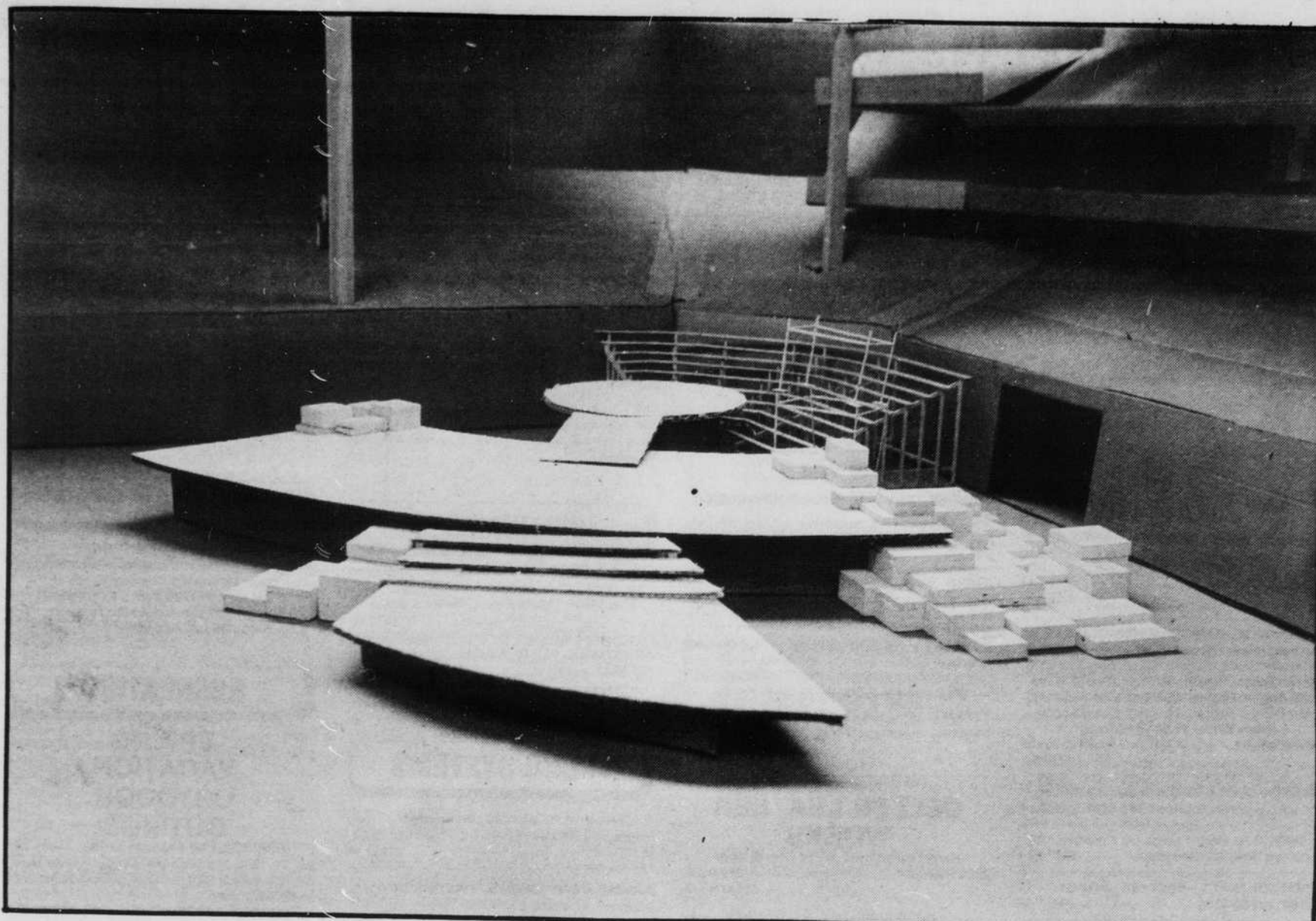


Photo by Beth Van Deusen

An accent on wit

By RANDY SHILTS

The current University Theater production of Noel Coward's "Private Lives," directed by Dan Hays, is immensely successful. The charm of the actors, the awing set and tasteful costuming, can transform the most downcast mood into its own wistful delight in its 2½-hour performance—a 2½ hours which rushes by in laughter.

The three-act comedy, set in the 1930s, follows the lines of a Shakespearean comic love-romance except that it is dosed with perpetual one-liners with an accent on wit rather than poetry. The plot is relatively simple. Amanda and Elyot, divorced from each other for five years, are honeymooning in the French Riviera with their respective new spouses, Victor and Sybil. Amanda and Elyot soon find that they accidentally have been assigned neighboring rooms. Upon meeting, they decide they are in love again, and rush off to Amanda's lavish Paris flat where they quarrel and make up innumerable times until Victor and Sybil show up. The drama's denouement then evolves into the quintessential happy ending.

Despite the simplicity of the plot, the stylized characters and rapid-fire one-liners keep the play both interesting and stimulating. Though this interest is largely due to Coward's own good script, it takes a professional cast to make the script work. And this production definitely works.

In an ordinary UT drama, Jeanne Beaird as Amanda would steal the show. In a production as this, where the acting has almost uniform excellence, she must settle for the title of most captivating character. She has a complex role where she must at times be bitchy and at other times seductive, while still maintaining her detached charm. Beaird pulls off this many-sided characterization quite well. Her voice, body movements and especially her eye contact, enthrall the audience throughout the play.

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Elyot, played by John DeScutner, seems to have trouble settling into his character during the first act as he occasionally overacts. For this reason, the first act drags briefly. For the second and third acts, however, he adjusts himself to his quasi-absurdist portrayal and becomes convincingly natural.

Both Ave Marie Hanlon as Sybil and Ron Hanson as Victor carry their parts admirably. Unlike Amanda and Elyot, these two must play shallow, almost predictable characters to fool their complicated spouses. They are not so predictable, however, that they don't pull off good one-liners themselves. Hanlon's high-pitched, Mary Astor voice and shrill Edith Bunker laugh, bring

constant chuckles throughout the comedy. At first, she seems uncomfortable within her body movements, but by the play's finale, she relaxes into her character. Hanson as Victor looks, talks, sighs and walks like the bewildered, befuddled business executive he stereotypes.

The only major man in acting is with Louanne Moldovan who briefly enters as Louise, the French maid. Her French is awful. Rather than speaking with a Parisian accent, she seems to talk with a Cambodian intonation. Her short appearance, however, is not enough to distract from the success of the play.

No little credit for this play's achievement is due to Ron Gloekler's glamorous, period cos-

tuming. The elegant dresses and sharp suits probably would be the show stopper if it were not for Jerry Williams' intricate set. When the curtain rises on the set of Amanda's Parisian flat, the audience responds with a chorus of oohs and ahs. This implicit applause to the set—colored in hues of green and gold—is well-deserved.

The fact that "Private Lives" is not a particularly profound drama, is both a minus and plus. It is a

minus in that the cast must work doubly hard to maintain the audience's interest and a plus in that the cast has only to refine their characterizations instead of a possibly burdensome message. Dan Hays' direction manipulates all the pluses and shoves any possible problems into the corner. The play's final performances (tonight through Saturday) are guaranteed to offer 2½ hours respite from the grueling load of this term's end.

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