

Actress brings enthusiasm to lead role in 'Funny Girl'

By KATY LASSWELL
Of the Emerald

Sitting in the University Theater Green Room, Sandi Puckett unwraps a piece of gum and puts it in her mouth. "I've earned my living singing," she says. "And my place in the world." She unwraps another piece of gum, sticks it in her mouth and lights a cigarette.

Puckett, a University graduate, is starring in Carnival Theater's production of "Funny Girl," which opens at 8:30 tonight for a two-weekend run (July 21-23, 27-30). She talks about her part as Fanny Brice, the stage and radio comedienne, with enthusiasm.

"I've loved it (the play) and wanted to do it ever since it came out. I bet I've listened to that album upwards of 2,000 times." She laughed and then got serious. "I feel very right about the part. It's like I'm playing somebody I know very well."

Puckett waves her hand encouraging cigarette smoke to move to other parts of the Green Room, and continues. "If you want to know where it all began, I started in church at seven, singing 'I believe for every drop of rain that falls, a flower grows.'" She laughs and shakes her head. "Oh, boy!"

Puckett, currently a music

teacher at Page Elementary School in Springfield, is not a total stranger to Carnival Theater, although she had been away for a while. Along with performing in several plays and musicals while in college, she did "Hello, Dolly" in the summer of 1970.

Describing herself as a guest artist, she admits to channeling all her energies into the part of Fanny. Usually members of the Carnival Company divide their time between rehearsals and working on props, sets, and costumes for the various plays produced during the season.

Puckett's singing experience ranges from her debut in church at seven to singing in night clubs and a gay bar in New York City.

"The gay bar job lasted for one night," she explains. "But it was an experience. I went to New York for the summer just to get away from Eugene."

She found an accompanist and got the job in the bar. "Things didn't work out as planned and the job lasted one night," she laughs. "That was the extent of my career in New York."

A third piece of gum is unwrapped and it joins the other two. Sandi continues her recounting of past summers.

"Last year I worked on a British

Cruise ship (she was singer in the ship's bar). It was fun, really fun, and it was beautiful. We took an inland passage from Vancouver to Sitka, Alaska," she remembers. "I sang a lot of songs I sing in this show."

She snuffs out her cigarette, lights another, and returns to the subject of Fanny and "Funny Girl."

"I've been looking forward to doing this for so long that I want to commit my life to it."

One Carnival Company member talked about watching Puckett rehearse.

"It's like she slips into a whole other person. First you see Sandi Puckett and then she turns into Fanny Brice. Everything changes. I mean I'd actually believe that she came from a poor, Jewish, New York family. It's unbelievable. It's like watching a pro."

Does she feel uneasy about having a part that Barbra Streisand originated? "I'm not defensive about that at all," she said. "I'm not even thinking about it."

Puckett snuffs out her cigarette, spits out her huge wad of gum and stands up. "Vell, sweetheart, is there anything else?" she asks, becoming Fanny Brice. "No? Vell then, I'm off!" And she walks away humming the tune of "Don't Rain on my Parade."

Tickets for "Funny Girl" are \$4. Reservations can be made by calling 686-4191.



Photo by Erich Boekelheide
University Theater's "Funny Girl" Sandi Puckett.

Organization seeks equality

"Our primary function is to monitor the University's overall compliance with Federal and State Laws" says Ralph Rosa, assistant director of the University Office of Affirmative Action.

The grievance counseling office has moved to 472 Oregon Hall. Affirmative Action deals with all complaints of discrimination involving employment or education.

The University must seek out applicants if the hiring pool is lacking in minority, female, or handicapped prospects. Law requires that minority and female applicants are actively recruited to the same degree that white males are sought. The Office of Affirmative Action is not only of help to minorities, women, handicapped and aged, Rosa says. "In a secretarial pool, we consider an affirmative action candidate a male, because it's a stereotype female position."

Once a nondiscriminatory pool has been formed, the applicants are judged on the basis of qualifications for the given job.

Myra Willard is the director of the University's office. Karen Alvarado is an assistant, dealing with scholastic transgressions, and Ralph Rosa deals with hiring on campus. They must report their progress to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare every other year. Ralph says of progress so far, "It's not something that's going to be tackled, and changed overnight. I do believe that the University is making sincere efforts at it, and we're here to ensure they do. That's our purpose."



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