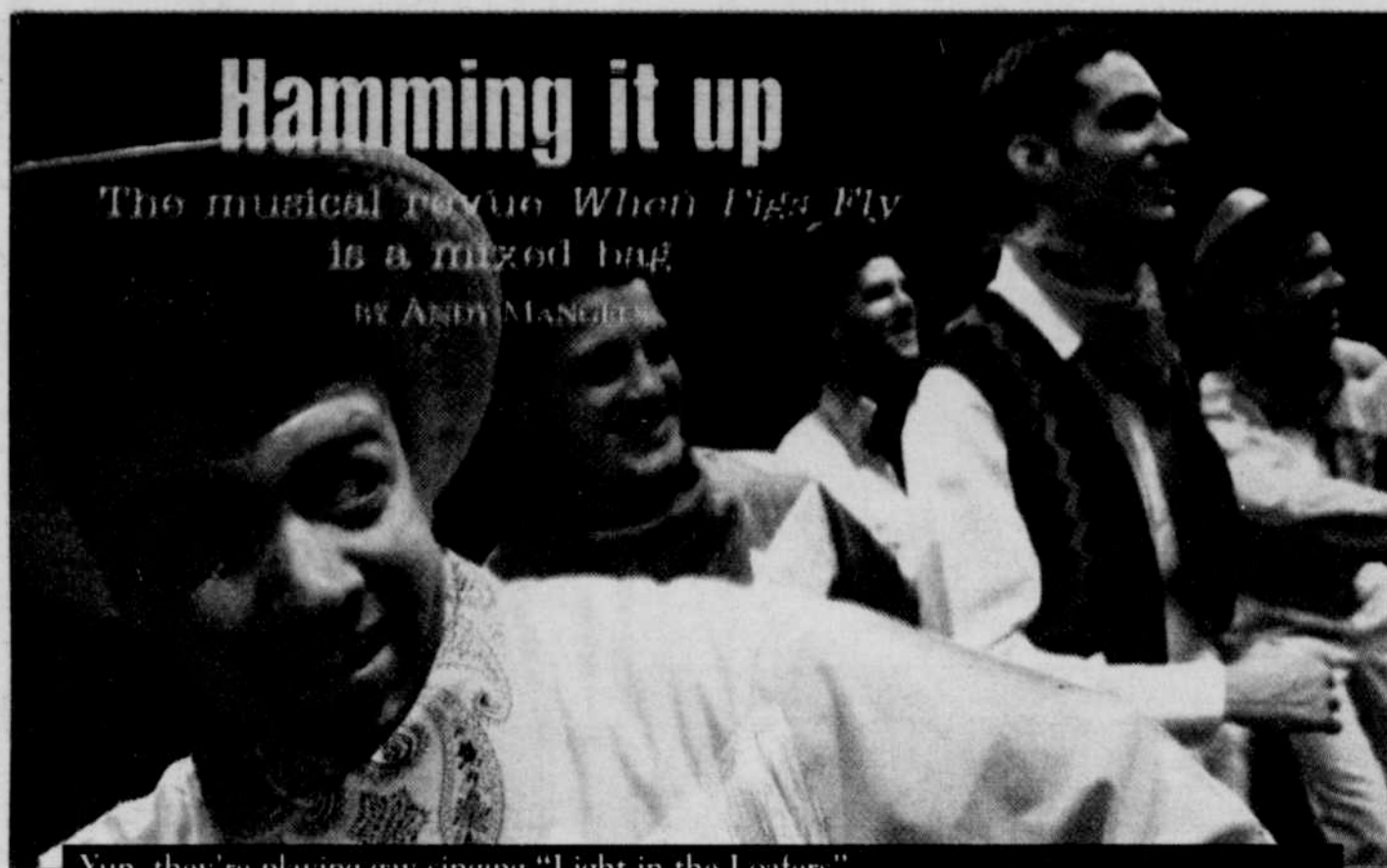


Hamming it up

The musical revue *When Pigs Fly* is a mixed bag.

BY ANDY MANDEL



Yup, they're playing gay singing "Light in the Loafers"

The first thing you need to know about *When Pigs Fly* is...it's not in the Theater! Theatre! building, home of most triangle productions! shows. As with several of triangle's other musicals, it plays at the World Trade Center Theatre in downtown Portland.

I learned this the hard way, showing up to the wrong theater, then zipping across town. So I'll warn you for this review that I missed the first 15 minutes of the show itself.

That missing time period was largely important only in the show's minuscule setup. Howard Crabtree (Joe Ford) is a young gay man who daydreams of lavish musical productions and a future in costuming and stage work.

He's jolted into reality by a guidance counselor, Ms. Vera Roundhole (Michael Teufel), who

scolds him and says his aptitude tests reveal he only would be good at four jobs: watch repair, garden supplies, chicken farming and plumbing. He'll do a show his own way, she says, "when pigs fly!"

The gauntlet thrown, Howard launches the show proper, which is really just a musical revue/cabaret with silly costumes, utilizing the talents of Ford himself and players Kelsey Tyler, Scott Wiemer, Darrin Murrell and Gregg Arnston. A recurring lounge singer (Murrell) boasts of his romantic love for geriatric hate-mongers Newt Gingrich, Rush Limbaugh and Strom Thurman ("Strom, go ask your mom, if I can take you to the senior, senior, senior, senior prom"), while another segment has an abysmal small-town theatrical company mounting its own Broadway-inspired musicals such as *The*

Hunchback of Notre Dame ("We've got a hunch, he's in love") and *Annie III*.

The "Shaft of Love" number is a big hit with the audience, as the performers traverse the inclined stage in high platform shoes, silver lamé bodysuits and huge afros. Later, a lonely man (Tyler) laments others making fun of him in the shower before stepping out of it to reveal the mythical answer to the question "Why Do They Say I'm Not All Man?"

Verbal punnery is the name of the game with "Sam and Me," a paean to 1960s television's most closeted couple, as well as in the 18th century Restoration number "We Wear Our Vanity with Pride," which compares painful beauty regimens of yesteryear with painful beauty regimens of today. One of the show's gayest numbers is "You Need Us to Make the USA," in which the singers boast, "You can't take the sissy out of Mississippi" and so forth.

Given that the show rises and falls on the strength of its costumes and its main singers, it's a mixed bag. Arnston stands out with one of the

strongest voices, with Wiemer (who plays a torch singer) running a close second. Murrell's voice is strong, but he overly mugs to the audience, while Tyler—who looks sumptuous in a few almost-nude scenes—is hard to hear at times during the show, which is not miked.

The costumes represent some of the most lavish that triangle ever has had to produce, with fat showgirl suits, mermaid suits, a flying pig, a centaur, a

gaggle of queer fur-covered cowboys and living embodiments of the four jobs for which Crabtree has a supposed aptitude. And although some of them are fabulous, others are embarrassingly amateur (take the band costumes, please!).

With the exception of a few homo-riffic political songs, *When Pigs Fly* has the flimsiest of plots and themes—and feels dated in a few spots—but the audience doesn't seem to mind its kid-in-a-candy-store feel. As in any revue, if one segment seems weak, at least there's comfort that a stronger one might be up next.

In today's movie world of gross-out and mean-spirited humor and television world of repetitive sitcom plots, patrons should enjoy the "anything goes," almost vaudevillian atmosphere of *When Pigs Fly*. Just make sure you go to the right theater. **JM**

WHEN PIGS FLY plays through May 19 at the World Trade Center Theatre, 121 S.W. Salmon St. For tickets call the box office at 503-239-5919 or Fastixx.



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