

Anansi and the Enchanted Prince

Church theater productions are always hazardous ground for critics and that is why most of them won't review church plays. The expectation is that the production values will be low and the sensitivity to even the gentlest and most well-intentioned criticism will be high.

Still this fearless critic ventures into the land of eggshells on occasion. This past week I attended the performance of Anansi and the Enchanted Prince put on by the Revelation Players of New Psalmist Baptist Church and I was quited charmed by what I saw.

Perhaps the watching of a non-malicious fantasy was a welcome from some of the morbid and pretension offering I suffer from at more professional theaters. Perhaps I am a sucker for a happy ending and a story where no one gets killed or maimed. I enjoyed this play.

The story centers around a prince who has been turned into a spider and the impending marriage of the woman he loves to a nerd who is the son of a rich woman in Africa where it all takes place.

Unless the beautiful daughter of a woman whose business is mortgaged to the lady moneybags marries the son, the mortgage will be foreclosed. Naturally the girl really loves the enchanted prince who weaves a spiderweb over her bed at night. They dance in the dream and are very much in love. He gets turned back into a prince, get married, and lives happily ever after.

The play featured original music written by members of the church and although the singing was not of professional caliber no tunes were mutilated and the tentativeness of some of the singers and dancers added to the innocent charm of the play.

Despite having a fairly large cast, the play moved well. People seemed to know very well when they were supposed to move on or off stage. The choreography was clever and did not demand more than the dancers could give.

The play was seriously hampered by the dreadful acoustics of the Lombard Junior High School Auditorium but then most school auditoriums are that way in this land of cultural desolation.

The production had some of the same flaws that show up in most amateur productions, overacting, poor diction and lines delivered too rapidly, but this was a lighthearted entertainment that carried a little of the magic of childhood fairy tales. Who couldn't use a little magic in these ugly, grim realistic days?

Audition Class

The Turn Out Studio announces a new three week session on "How To Audition" for actors, singers, dancers, models beginning June 6, 1986, 7:30-9:30 p.m. To register one should call Denise Boston 889-9190.

Theatre Announces Summer Program

A performing arts day camp offering drama, dance, art and swimming will be conducted by the Children's Theater Association (CTA) from June 23 to July 17, 1986 at the Mount Royal School, 121 McMechen Street in Bolton Hill.

For boys and girls aged 8 through 14, the program is scheduled Mondays through Thursdays, with a culminating performance on Thursday, July 17. For information or to enroll, call CTA at 225-0052.

The morning program, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, consists of creative drama and dance classes. Cost is $35 per week, plus a one-time registration fee of $10. Creative drama classes include: theater games and improvisations, and end with a full student production. Dance classes provide training in basic dance movement, modern and traditional dances suitable for young actors.

The afternoon program, from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. offers swimming lessons on Mondays and Wednesdays and art on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Cost is $25 per week. Art classes offer theater related art, such as mask making, scenery and face painting. Well supervised swimming classes will be at the downtown YWCA indoor pool.



Debbie Allen has found "fame" on Broadway. For her role as prostitute Charity Hope Valentine in "Sweat Charity," Allen has been nominated for a Tony Award. The awards show airs Sunday, June 1 on CBS.

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Little more can be said about the new Tri-Star release, SHORT CIRCUIT, other than it's bound for stardom in the summer box office round-up.

SHORT CIRCUIT, written by S.S. Wilson and Brent Maddock, produced by David Foster and Lawrence Turman, and directed by John Badham ("SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER," "WARGAMES," "BLUE THUNDER"), stars Ally Sheedy, Steve Guttenberg, and Fisher Stevens.

The true "star" of the movie, from beginning to end, is Number Five, the cutest, most adorable (and sophisticated) little robot of sorts that you ever cared to lay your eyes on. And believe me, Number Five **should** be alive if he isn't already!



NUMBER FIVE carefully reads a map and gives Ally Sheedy (right) directions as they plan an escape from NOVA commandoes out to destroy the incredible robot.



The movie takes a little time to warm up and get moving, but once it does, which ironically and soon understandably is when Number Five gets into the act, there's no stopping the chuckles.

Sheedy, Guttenberg and Stevens are considered to be three of the most talented young actors working in films today. They perform their roles equally well and compliment each other's on-screen characterizations with zany naivete, confusion, and ineptness with a good dose of "wholesome" thrown in.

Fisher Stevens plays Ben Jabituya (Jab-It-To-Yah), an Indian scientist whose tongue-in-cheek humor comes from his misuse of the English language. Hopefully, our East Indian citizens won't be offended.

Guttenberg's character, Dr. Newton Crosby, is a cross between the nutty professor, a madcap yet concerned scientist, a veritable genius and a love-starved fool. His youthful enthusiasm comes alive (like #Five) on screen providing energetic lifts to many scenes.

Ally Sheedy, fits the persona of Stephanie Speck — lover of lost animals, to a tee. Her girl-next-door look is perfect for the "Ivory Soap and health food" role. She and Number Five make the perfect couple for the 80's.

As far as Number Five goes, he is a combo of two of the most lovable characters ever to hit the big screen, namely R2-D2 and E.T. Designed by Syd Mead, engineered by Eric Allard, with robotic performance by Tony Urbano and voice of Tim Blaney, this robot's got class!

I'm not particularly sure where one person's job intersected with the other's but, the finished product is incredible. Number Five has wit and sensitivity, can change his expressions, sing, drive a truck and quite literally, is able to kick up his heels to the tune of SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER!

Number Five really does become "alive" in the moviegoer's eyes, because somehow this cute chunk of scrap metal and wire manages to endear himself, or itself to the hearts of all who watch. Plus, absolutely no one can claim there's a human hidden anywhere inside this machine! And that's a fact. It would be totally impossible.

I would recommend SHORT CIRCUIT as family fare for the summer. Light-hearted and fancy-free comedic entertainment, this movie carries a PG rating. My rating is 5 out of 5.

SHORT CIRCUIT, a must-see to believe, is playing at area theatres everywhere.

'Sunday' featured at Club Casino

They say all truths are revealed in the wee small hours of the morning. A lonely embittered old man sits in his apartment listening to Billie Holiday records at 3 a.m. in the morning.

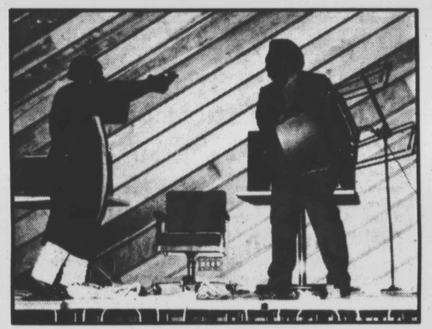
A knock sounds at his door. It is the embodiment of his bitterest disappointment in life, his nephew Aaron, a prominent attorney who has turned his back on the uncle who raised him and the race that fought for equality so that he could be the success that he is.

The play is "Sunday" written by playwright, journalist, actor R.B. Jones, no stranger to controversy. He and costar, photographer Irving H. Phillips, create a dramatic tension between characters who are diametrically opposed yet very much alike.

The play will be presented at Club Casino, 1515 Pennsylvania Ave. Sunday, June 1 and June 8. Admission is $10.00 and includes dinner. There will also be a DJ playing oldies but goodies.

Dinner starts at 6 p.m. The play begins at 7:30 and the DJ will play records before and after the play.

For ticket information call 367-7173.



Irving H. Phillips, Jr. as Uncle Johnny, points a gun at his nephew Aaron Wells, played by R. B. Jones in the drama, "Sunday." The play, written by Jones, will be a part of a dinner theatre production at the Club Casino.

