

UNLV's latest theatre release captivates audiences

By Andy Keroles
Contributing A&E Writer

The *Mystery of Edwin Drood* was adapted for theatre from the incomplete book by Charles Dickens.

Or as the play's Chairman William Cartwright (returning guest actor, Curtis C.) will tell you, Master Dickens committed the most selfish act of his life by dying before the story's completion.

That's where audience participation comes in.

You see, the play has no ending, so audiences vote on who they want to be the murderer, who they want to fall in love and who the undercover detective is.

Audience participation is organized by costumed and English accented cast members who divide the theatre into sections and tally up the votes after the play.

But the voting doesn't come until the end, and there is much to see before then.

The story starts off with a musical entry, which introduces the play's general character identity to the audience.

Then, a narrator is added to the show. The lovable Chairman William Cartwright adds wit and humor throughout the (humoristically rendered) drama of the mystery.

The Chairman explains the cast's philosophy at the beginning of the show as that which will "make its most earnest effort" to do justice to Dickens's story.

Jessica Raymer is cast as the story's mystery figure. She delivers solid performances and the proper conduct of an enterprising English-woman on the verge of an undesired marriage.

But she is killed way too soon.

Drood's appropriately jealous uncle, John Jasper, is played quite believably by Thomas C. Turner. Jasper is a controversial main character

to whom so much treachery is attributed; when voting for the murderer at the end, cast members discourage voting for Jasper's character (because of the lack of imagination this would entail).

The LanDless twins play an extraordinary role in the plot. Neville (Isaiah Hiram Urrabazo) and Helena (Rochele Tillman) are wealthy (Indian?) immigrants with self-proclaimed geographically untraceable accents.

Because they add a solid mystery factor to the plot, they become immediate audience favorites from their first exotic appearance until their final dance.

The irrepressible Crickers play a father/son combo as Deputy (Joshua Roberts) and Durdles (Scott Johnson) display extraordinary talent and are by far the funniest pair in the show.

But the real show-stealer is Bazzard (Jake Bendel), who doesn't really seem to have any real purpose in the play. Bazzard's roles are short, brief and draining to the character, who explains to the audience that he was meant for the "big role," but just can't seem to get one.

In an enthusiastic role, Bazzard tends to the needs of the other players as a butler, waiter and general stagehand helper, until Chairman feels sorry for him and has a personal conversation with him in the middle of the play.

He ends delivering an impromptu performance of a song he wrote for an upcoming play. Because it had nothing to do with this play (the song was called "Never the Luck" about a guy who's down and out) it was a welcome addition to the story.

The play's ending varies from performance to performance. It is determined by the audience vote.

What surprised me was how incredibly well rehearsed the players



The principle cast members of *Drood!* (From top to bottom and left to right) Curtis C., Tom Turner, Jessica Raymer as *Drood*, Dawn Copeland and Evelina Marchetti.

were in the ending that our audience voted on.

Our killer was Drood's own fiancé, our lovers were Cricker and Helena (the dirty construction guy and the Indian Princess end up falling in love? It was pretty hilarious) and the irrepressible Bazzard was our detective. It was all so absurd, but so meticulously realistic in the end, I

wanted to see it again.

Particularly fine singing performances, including the rollicking "Both Sides of the Coin," and "A Day at the Races," are abounding in this play.

The play was executed with style and good taste.

Characters were well versed, overwhelmingly believable and

charming. Audience participation added a dimension of excitement that is unusual in a musical/play of this nature.

The intensity of the comedy relief was delivered enthusiastically and with skill.

When the curtain went up on stage, from the first act to the very ending, the stage, props and design were first class and not what one expects in a college performance.

The play was a delightful treat and comes highly recommended by the *Rebel Yell's* A&E section.

It comes off as an absolute jewel in UNLV's hat.

Even if you are not a theatre-buff, this is one of those shows that is wrong to miss. It is so full of talent that it would be hard to pass up seeing a second time, just to see how differently the endings can be done.

Catch this one while it's still playing in the Judy Bailey Theatre from Wednesday to Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m.

The play was directed by Dianne Haak Edson, whose directed scores include critically acclaimed theatrical productions on both academic and professional stages.

Edson also directs extensively in film and television, and has made over 30 dramatic, documentary and educational films. She has won twenty-four national and international awards and holds degrees from UCLA and the American Film Institute.

Marie Pogee, the musical's choreographer, directs and choreographs around the world. She was direction and production consultant for the homage to Garcia Lorca performed at Artemus W. Ham Concert Hall with the *Las Vegas Symphony Orchestra*.

Pogee is currently Vice President and Artistic Director of the America Dance Company.

Acclaimed dance group performs Tuesday

The Rebel Yell

The **Mark Morris Dance Group** performs Tuesday at 8 p.m. in the Artemus W. Ham Concert Hall.

Formed in 1980 by choreographer and dancer Mark Morris, now a fellow of the MacArthur Foundation, the group presented its first performance in New York City that year. After tours both in the United States and Europe, the *Mark Morris Dance Group* was invited in 1988 to become the national dance company of Belgium and spent three years in residence at the Theatre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels.

Today, in addition to a full international touring schedule, the dance group recently completed two film projects — a collaboration with cellist Yo-Yo Ma entitled, "Falling Down Stairs," using Bach's Third Suite for Unaccompanied Cello, and a film version of Morris' "Dido and Aeneas."

Morris, a native of Seattle, is noted for his devotion to music and his ability to conjure many contradictory styles and emotions with dance. A critic for *The Washington Post* described



The **Mark Morris Dance Group** dances its way into Ham Concert Hall Tuesday at 8 p.m.

Morris as "our Mozart of modern dance. There is that same sense of easy fecundity, his air of an aging, congenial *enfant terrible*, the sheer brilliance and wealth of his choreographic invention."

He has created more than 90 works for his dance group as well as choreographing dances for ballet companies ranging from the San Francisco Ballet and the Paris Opera Ballet to the American Ballet Theatre. He recently directed and choreographed Rameau's "Plate" for a

Royal Opera, Covent Garden production at the Edinburgh International Festival.

KLVX Channel 10 is the official television sponsor of the UNLV Performing Arts Center 1997-1998 Production Season. There will be a season premiere reception following the performance in the lobby.

Tickets for the concert range from \$23 to \$56 and may be purchased at the UNLV Performing Arts Center Box Office, 895-3801, or at Dillard's department stores, 1-800-654-9545.

Discounts are available for students, seniors, military, and disabled.

The UNLV Performing Arts Center features a special discount for all greater Las Vegas students, including public schools and colleges; one hour prior to the performance students may obtain a *student rush* ticket for only \$10.

The Performing Arts Center Box Office is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Race For Atlantis

By Brian J. Kuchar
Staff A&E Writer

Caesars Palace spares no expense with **Race For Atlantis**, the latest in the technologically driven simulator rides.

Located in the Forum Shops, the most successful retail area in the world, *Race For Atlantis* is destined for success. One may think that Caesars might put an mediocre attraction in this mall. It would still draw unknowing tourists to the tourist attraction, which has played host to 20 million visitors a year since its opening. This is not the case, because Caesars has made an excellent adventure for people of all ages.

"Race for Atlantis" is the first-ever permanent, giant-screen IMAX 3D motion simulator thrill ride. It is produced by the same team that made the *Back to the Future* ride at Universal Studios. That attraction has been the most successful of all the rides at Universal because of its innovation and technological advances in the thrill ride business.

IMAX and Caesars combined heads to make an excellent adventure that mixed Caesars' theme with

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