

# Playhouse's Hamlet exceeds all expectations

By Neal Faigman

Throughout the centuries, Hamlet has been the supreme test of an actor's skills. Actors from Richard Burbage through Edwin Booth and David Garrick have made or firmly established

role before the American public. The present Cleveland Play House production is as good as any production I have seen.

In the past I have gone to the Play House in hopes of viewing a night of good theatre. Rarely

appearance Hamlet seemed weak and inconsequential but this impression quickly faded. By the time Hamlet appeared on the parapet to confront the Ghost, it was apparent that Mr. Sutorius was capable of dealing with the epic role. Throughout the play his conception of the character never faltered and the audience's belief in him never wavered. He was always in supreme control of the situation, as Hamlet should be, for until the final scene Hamlet is in complete control of the people around him. Mr. Sutorius has a command of both the tragic and sardonic elements as well as the comic, which the heavy mood of the play demands in order not to oppress the audience.

Edmund Lyndeck's Claudius was beautiful. Rather than a villain, he is a victim of harsh circumstance. He has not killed his brother out of hatred but rather out of love for his brother's queen. The crown of Denmark emerges as an incidental trapping of the murder in this Claudius' eyes. His attempts to murder Hamlet are not inspired by hatred but by expediency. Claudius would much prefer to win Hamlet over but Hamlet will not allow himself to be won; therefore Hamlet must, regrettably, be disposed of. Claudius' death at the play's end is not a triumph of good over evil but rather a brutal death for an entrapped and doomed man. There is no real villain.

Robert Allman's Polonius was also extremely well done; though extremely mockable he never becomes a mockery. Polonius' death at Hamlet's hands, though it doesn't particularly upset Hamlet, deeply hits the audience. Polonius, who has never been a fool though sometimes foolish, dies such a painful and useless death; it really hurts.

I did have some trouble accepting John Bergstrom's Horatio until the final scene.

Horatio never really made any strong impression on me. He appeared to be a more or less colorless adjunct tacked onto Hamlet's person. In the final scene though, he more than makes up for his early deficiencies. His inability to deal with the death of his friend dominates the final moments of the play.

Peggy Roeder's Ophelia was marvelous. Though initially weak, she triumphed in the mad scenes. In prior productions I have never quite accepted Ophelia's insanity; there was absolutely no lack of credulity here.

worked very well in the first part of the play, which required intimacy but only got in the way during the duel between Hamlet and Laertes.

The massive platform that dominated the set more than often caused awkwardness, as when Hamlet bounced across it followed by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and only worked well when Hamlet confronted the ghost. The omni-present mist served more to highlight the overhead spot lights than cause a mood of mystery.

have been more efficient but it did work.

The present production of

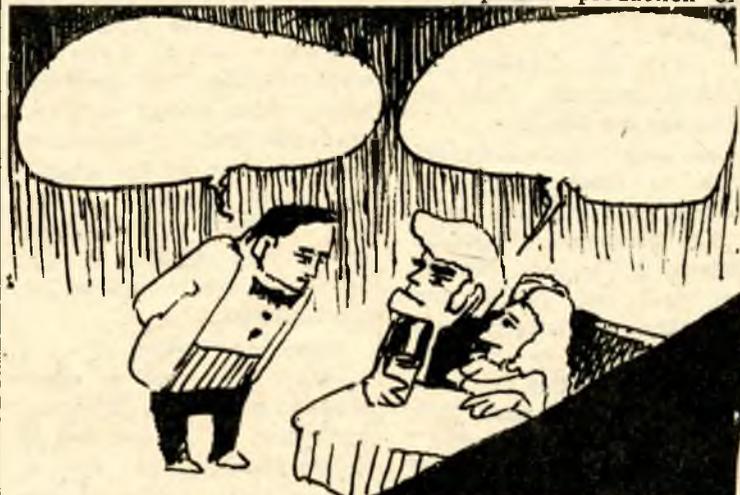


Hamlet, William Shakespeare's monumental tragedy of murder and revenge will be at the Cleveland Playhouse through March 9 in the Drury Theatre. Here, the spurned Ophelia (Peggy Roeder) confused from Hamlet's rejection of her love, questions Hamlet (James Sutorius) concerning his madness. - by James Fry

their credentials by playing the Danish Prince. Hamlet has even on occasion been played by such famous actresses as Sarah Bernhardt. Most recently, Nicol Williamson and Richard Chamberlain have played the

have my hopes been equalled by the quality of the production. Fortunately, the present Hamlet not only lived up to but even exceeded my expectations.

James Sutorius as the Dane, started off weakly. In his initial



I feel that Jo Farwell was miscast as Gertrude. Though she handled the role brilliantly, she appeared must too youthful. True, Gertrude must be young enough to Claudius desire her, but here she seemed young enough to pass for Hamlet's sister.

Though the set brilliantly fit the mood that the production required, it also created several problems. As usual at the Play House, only about half of the depth of a very deep stage is used. In effect, much of the play was so pushed forward as to crowd the characters too closely and push them into the audience's lap. There were a number of platform blocks in the downstage area which

Hamlet at the Play House is excellent and well worth the two dollar admission fee. The cast, crew, and directors of Hamlet are to be commended on bringing to Cleveland one of the best pieces of theatre to be seen here in too long a time.

Theatre in Eldred Hall Box office for Shakespeare's As You Like It will be open Feb. 13, 14, and 15 for season ticket holders only.

Ticket cost is \$2 for the general public and \$1 for students.

The ticket office hours will be 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. For information and reservations call, 368-2904. As you like It will be performed Feb. 28, March 1,2,3,7,8,9, and 10.

## Joni Mitchell to play in Cleveland

By GEOFFREY COOPER

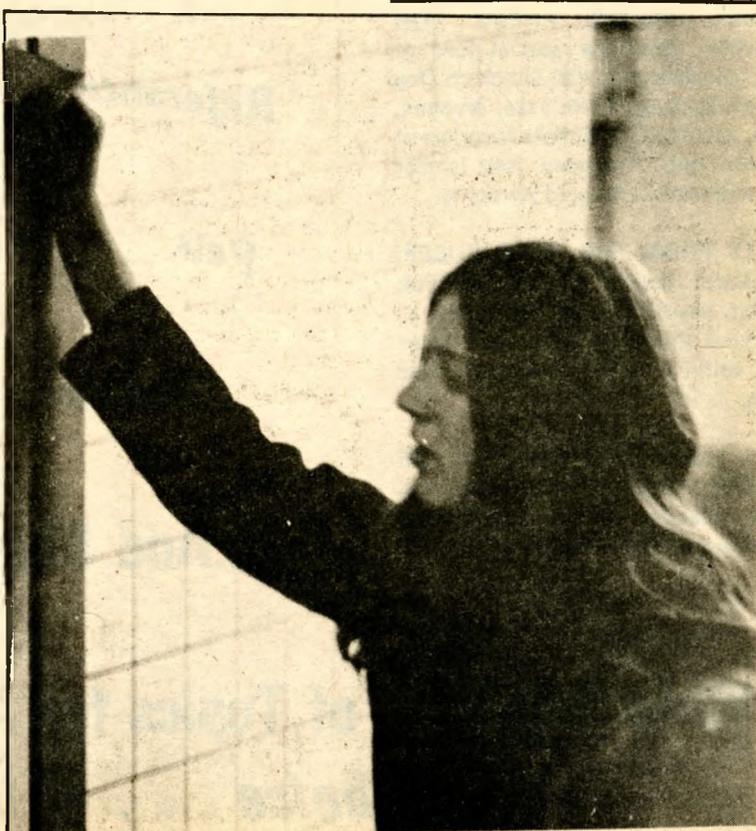
You won't often hear recordings of "Both Sides Now" or "Woodstock" by Joni Mitchell. The songs that were made famous by Judy Collins and Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young, respectively, were both written by Joni Mitchell during the time she was rising from obscurity to the folk-rock world in the shadow of Bob Dylan and Joan Baez. But as Dylan and Baez have faded from the scene along with their songs of protest (assuming that Dylan's recent highly acclaimed tour is merely for the sake of nostalgia rather than a concerted comeback effort) Mitchell has remained and has bridged gap between the protest music of the middle and late 60's to the love music of the 70's. She holds her own in the wake of such specialists as Carly Simon and Carol King.

It began simply enough for Joni Mitchell. She casually picked up a ukelele at the age of 20 while still a Calgary art student. After spending some time performing in Toronto cafes she became good enough to tour college campuses in Canada and the United States in the late 60's, billed as a rising folk star. She developed a unique style--a category by herself. Joni Mitchell has since reached a successful plateau apparently without

recently released her fourth album "Court and Spark" and has come into ownership of a recording company.

Her style is difficult to characterize. Her fourth album, "Blue," is perhaps the best example of her work. "Blue" is not a flow of music along a loosely set theme as are most albums but rather a collection of ten dissimilar pieces. Her music is uncomplicated and accoustic--almost pastoral. She sings in a tone that is at once deep and rich, instantly climbing to the farthest reaches of the scale without the slightest trace of tremor. Her lyrics are bold, somewhat less than poetic, but not ballad-like. They speak of travel, California, and lost loves (perhaps stemming from her divorce several years ago which some observers seem to feel has affected her lyrical style).

This Wednesday, February 13, Joni Mitchell will appear in Cleveland at Music Hall. The acoustics in Music Hall are rather good so it should be quite suited to her style. She attracts a select following--those with an undefinable taste for fine music. The original artist--the singer that did not make "Both Sides Now" an "Woodstock" famous--Joni Mitchell will cater her uncharacterizable music to the undefinable tastes of an audience that will fill every seat at Cleveland Public Music Hall.



Joni Mitchell will appear this Wednesday in Cleveland's own Music Hall.

intention of being thrust to the forefront. She