

# ON STAGE

NIGHT & DAY, Thursday, May 11, 2006

## Get whisked away to 'Camelot'

### Niagara players shine at Riviera show

By Doug Smith

It's more truth than chivalry to declare that the Niagara Regional Theatre Guild has won the battle of "Camelot." Finding new truth in this old warhorse suggests a magic worthy of Merlin.

Director John Quackenbush keeps the audience's allegiance while retaining the musical's full length and integrity – every song, every verse, every line. It runs slightly more than three hours.

Among the refreshingly large crowd exiting the Riviera Theatre after Sunday's matinee, we did not hear one suggestion that the time had been squandered, even though evening had arrived. And while many were of an age that suggested they weren't young when "Camelot" was new, there seemed to be a lot of learning going on.

"Camelot" sets the legend of King Arthur to fable and music. Arthur, played with shaggy warmth, great humility and fine voice by Steve Jakiel, reluctantly takes as his bride Guenevere, played radiantly by dusky and throaty beauty Jennifer Yadav.

Trouble arrives in the pretensions of Sir Lancelot, into whom actor Robert Zahm pours 6½ feet of insufferable French arrogance, not to mention a simply stupendous voice and impeccable diction. His self-anointing "c'est moi" about brought down the house and even attracted the ultimate compliment – a spattering of hisses.

But there's no accounting for taste; he and Guenevere "hit it off," to take a phrase from one era, but never quite "hook up," to take a phrase from another. These were times when people actually took control of their lives and actions.

Then comes Mordred, product of a piece of Arthur's past, so to speak. He is pure trouble and proud of it, played with all-encompassing evil by Bob Keller. Mordred not only knows right from wrong, he knows how to twist one to get the other, as outlined in the Lerner and Loewe's "Seven Deadly Virtues." Then there's the nearly silly "Fie on Goodness," smartly choreographed by Dawn Marcolini-Newton.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

**ROYALLY GOOD FUN:** Steve Jakiel as King Arthur and Jennifer Yadav as Lady Guenevere star in "Camelot," continuing through May 20 at the Riviera Theatre.

In a lesser “Camelot,” Keller would steal the show; in this one, he instead makes a donation of perspective. As jolly and oafish King Pellinore (Paul Bene) says to Arthur, “You sired a skunk.”

Not quite. Skunks, at least, are cute.

Mordred’s game is to expose Guenevere’s supposed infidelity, then pose Arthur the dilemma of a law which would require her execution at the burning stake. A hint of redemption arrives with a young admirer, Tom of Warwick, portrayed by Alex Bock. Today, Tom would chase after Arthur with an autograph book; it convinces the “once and future” king that it wasn’t all for naught after all.

Due to some slightly muffled lyrics, Guenever’s fate wasn’t perfectly clear, but if you’re there, listen for the word “convent.”

Pianists Frank Cannata and Lynda Williams give skilled and robust support to more than two dozen players. Fran Newton’s set exudes solid authority, and Nancy Watts’ costumes create a medieval fantasy. Dream and fantasy sequences are nicely executed, especially the appearance of vocally pure Sue Hilts as dark side queen Morgan LeFey and the impish Jason Bock, who makes Merlin a puzzle even to himself.

Performances continue through May 20. The troupe’s next season includes “Damn Yankees” and “Inherit the Wind.”



Michigan regional  
Theatre Guild

Special Compensation  
Federal Programs Center  
Member of the Local  
Theatres, Inc.  
Southfield, Michigan, Canada

# Camelot

Music by Frederick Loewe  
Lyrics & Book by Alan Jay Lerner

May 5 — 20, 2006

Directed by John Clarkin  
Choreographed by Steve Mitchell  
Musical Director by Lynda Williams

**Bucket Raffle at Every Show!**  
Win a chance to win a special prize or a cash prize of \$100.00. Tickets are \$10.00 each. Proceeds go to the Michigan Regional Theatre Guild.

Reservations & Ticket Info:  
692-2413  
mrgtheatre.com

General Admission...\$17  
Students & Seniors...\$13

May 07, 08 (Fri., Sat.)	\$100 per
May 07 (Sunday Matinee)	\$40 per
May 12, 13 (Fri., Sat.)	\$40 per
May 14*** (Sunday Matinee)	\$40 per
May 19, 20 (Fri., Sat.)	\$40 per

\*Special thanks to our sponsors and staff for their generous contributions.

\*\*Seating by request - in advance only. Seating is first-come, first-served.

\*\*\*Seating by request - in advance only. Seating is first-come, first-served.

The Historic Riviera Theatre  
47 Westside St., Southfield, Michigan

