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NEWS

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MASQUERS CLOSE PLAY, OPEN MUSICAL COMEDY

A triumphant finish and an auspicious beginning mark Masquer Summer Theater activity this week. "Hay Fever," the season opener, closes an extended run in the Masquer Theater Sunday (July 10) at 8:30 p.m., and "The Bartered Bride" opens in the University Theater Wednesday, July 13, at 2:30 p.m. Evening performances will be given Thursday through Sunday, July 14-17, at 8:30 p.m.

"Hay Fever," which broke all summer attendance records in the Masquer Theater, will be a hard act to follow, but "The Bartered Bride" is sure to have equal audience appeal, according to S. Joseph Nassif, director of both shows.

The Masquer-Opera Workshop production of Smetana's enchanting comic opera features New York City soprano Marilyn Zschau as Marie and a supporting cast of 50, including star performers from the Opera Workshop.

A charming Bohemian village is the setting for the action, which opens with the villagers gaily singing of love. In contrast, Marie and her lover Jenik (Lee Mathews, Sunburst) are sad because Marie's father (Doug Manning, Kalispell) and mother (Esther England, New Plymouth, Idaho) are negotiating with Kecal, a marriage broker (Jim Selway, Dillon), to marry their daughter to the bumbling Vasek (Doug Dunnell, Missoula), the son of the rich Micha (Jim Terrell, Billings) and Hata (Elsie Phillips, Missoula)

(more)

Marie refuses to give up Jenik to marry a man she has never seen, but the marriage broker persuades Jenik to renounce Marie for 300 gulden. Jenik signs the contract on the condition that Marie is to marry no one but Micha's son. This is agreeable to Kecal as it is Micha's son Vasek that he intends to be the bridegroom. Only Jenik knows that he himself is a long-lost son of Micha by a former marriage and that by the terms of his contract with the broker he will still claim Marie as his bride.

In the meantime, Vasek has become infatuated with Esmeralda (Susie Volkel, Missoula), a dancer with a traveling troupe about to give a show in the village. To be near Esmeralda, Vasek dons a shaggy pelt to take the role of the bear offered him by the director (Dennis Craig, Missoula). Another of the strolling players is an Indian (Don Collins, Missoula).

Marie is heartsick at her betrayal by her lover and refuses to listen to his explanation of how he tricked the marriage broker. But all ends well, as is the custom in comic opera, when Micha recognizes Jenik as his older son and the bartered bride marries her true love.

These rather unlikely but delightful turns of plot are enacted against a backdrop of Bohemian gaiety provided by music by a 35-voice chorus and a 60-piece orchestra and by spirited polkas and other lively dances.

Prof. John Lester and Dr. David Whitwell are musical directors; Miss England is chorusmaster, and Dana Carter is choreographer.

The colorful production is designed by Richard H. James Jr., director of UM summer theater. The staff includes Nathan Nassif, stage manager; Fay Bunes, accompanist, and Les Hankinson, Karol Kramer and Michele MacMillan, assistants to Director Nassif. Jeannie Belangie is costume designer.

Tickets for the final performance of "Hay Fever" and for "The Bartered Bride" are available at the box office (243-4581), which opens at noon daily and remains open until curtain time on dates of performances. Special rates are offered to children who attend the matinee of "The Bartered Bride" Wednesday, July 13.