

# Promenade successful

By Charles Boyle

**Promenade**, a new musical, opened last Thursday at the Art Association. It is Edmond De Stasi's most successful production since *Marat/Sade*. Part of the reason for this is the material. In the past the most exciting shows, like last year's *Three Penny Opera*, have expressed something of the character and mood of this uncommonly talented troupe. This play will strike home for a lot of people.

It's not an easy show to absorb in one evening but it grows deeper with successive viewings. On the surface the plot revolves around two innocents, prisoners, who escape and steal their way into society. They crash a banquet of frivolous, thieving aristocrats whom they rob. In the street they rip-off a hit-and-run victim. On the battlefield they meet a pair of bandaged doughboys complaining about bad hamburgers and the women who've left them.

Mostly the show is about the theft of love. But the cynical aftermath of romance is presented with sharp wit and high spirits in *Promenade*. The lyrics by Irene Fornes are intelligent and funny. The eclectic melodies of Al Carmines, some containing shades of Brecht while others sparkle like Gershwin, produce the desired effect.

The company rises to their material. They have matured over the past few seasons. The strenuous demands of this show—it is almost all singing—has opened them up.

Though there could have been richer dramatic interplay among the aristocrats, each one stands out as a vivid personality. Charles Halal plays the pompous strongman. Sinuous Joe Webb is full of flimsy evil. Bob Henckel, wide-eyed, wholesome and precise, makes a good contrast to Cookie Mueller's brassy cheek. Maria Rivera impersonates that high

society institution, the snooty dowager who speaks through her nose. Marianna, an actress with the lean, proud profile of an Indian, has the loveliest voice in the cast. Her performance of "Capricious and Fickle" was a chilling blend of the humor and drama in that song.

Ray Keyton created the most believable character, a lanky dishwasher, cigarette butt between his lips. Bill Meves was amusing as a sweet nitwit with a bleeding heart. Eve evoked memories of *Three Penny Opera* as a sassy naked lady in a cake, daring anyone to take a bite.

As the Mayor, Joe Spinelli still maintains the most secure and consistent command of the stage. He is not so flamboyant as some of the others but he never falters. Another actor who's concentrated energy acts as a sparkplug for the cast is Ron Weissenberger. He grows stronger with each production.

Peyton is a trooper who's at home on any stage. She's also become an excellent comedienne, the beauty of her face heightening the delight in her clowning. On opening night she brought the audience to their feet at the finish of "Crown Me."

As the convicts Jeffrey Kresser and Pierre Eyans are both charming. Kresser has one of the most powerful voices in the show but Evans is rapidly closing the gap. On Friday night he delivered "A Poor Man" with startling conviction. Jane Astion has used dramatic simplicity and an easy vocal style to make a strong impression in her role as the old mother.

DiStasi has staged the show in the round and it flows gracefully. The lighting is effective and the settings simple and elegant. The trio of Richard Busch, Richard Amster and Izzie Sklar on piano, bass and drums supply sensitive support for the singers.



Peyton draws all eyes as star of 'Promenade.'

Advocate photo by Jim Gilbert