

SITE OF THE DAY



# ETC.

“ I've seen a lot more people using the whole PE center, especially since the aerobics studio was renovated and more equipment was added to the weight room.

Laina Tharp  
fitness coordinator, Blatt PE Center

”

Monday, March 24, 1997

The Gamecock

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## It's a roaring good play

*Androcles and the Lion* meets with success at Longstreet



Androcles (Terrance Henderson) warily prepares to remove a thorn from the paw of the lion (Jennifer Moody) in Theater USC's *Androcles and the Lion*.

LUCY ARNOLD Features Editor

Unlike *March*, the Theatre USC production of George Bernard Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion* comes in like a lion and goes out in much the same way.

In the first, enthralling moment of the performance, a lion leaps onstage and emits a wall-shaking roar at the audience. The production proceeds from there to bring humor, wit, tragedy and thought-provoking philosophy into the theater in two short acts.

The plot revolves around the fate of a group of Christians who refuse to make a show of worshipping Roman gods. Because they refuse to worship as the Romans do, they will be thrown to the lions in the Roman Coliseum.

In the group is Androcles, who, like Christ, apparently doesn't have a hurtful bone in his body—except when it comes to protecting animals. Androcles is in some ways comparable to animal rights activists today—although it's difficult to picture him splashing red paint over mink coats.

Shaw uses the example of early Christians to explain his own views of spirituality. Certainly his visionary Lavinia, one of the doomed Christians, spouts off loads of Shavian philosophy as she attempts to explain herself to the Roman "handsome captain."

It is easy, however, to lose sight of the fact that Shaw is almost certainly comparing the Roman religion, not early Christianity, to Christianity today. Lavinia's speech about the Romans who don't even believe in their own religion and yet refuse her true spirituality is parallel to some of the empty ceremony in

Christianity today.

But naturally it is neither Lavinia's spirituality, the captain's pragmatism nor even the courage of the little Christian troupe which forms the focal point of the play and steals the audience's hearts. That place is reserved for the simple story of Androcles and the lion. The first action of the play involves

### Vital Information

Play: *Androcles and the Lion*

Dates: March 21-29

Times: 8 p.m. (Tues.-Sat.)  
3 p.m. (Sun.)

Place: Longstreet Theater

Androcles removing a thorn from the lion's paw. As in the popular fable, *The Lion and the Mouse*, this action has beneficial consequences later.

The cast takes this plot and soars. In the program notes, Jennifer Moody refers to the part of the lion as a challenging role. This is true, but it is also true that she conquers it and makes it her own. Moody is outstanding with her lion movements and facial expressions. With the help of costume designer Rebecca L. Dosen and sound designer Rebecca R. Richey, she really is the heart of the show.

Darius L. Jamison as Ferrovius steals almost every one of his scenes. If everything else about the play were mediocre (and it certainly is not) this play would be worth seeing because of Jamison. His back and forth emotional states and true inner torments are both hilarious and heart-breaking at times.

Other notables among the cast are Lisa Snyder (*Megaera*) and Frank Maharajh (*Spintho*). Although Snyder appears only in the first scene as Androcles's wife, she is memorable. Next time Theatre USC puts on Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, I hope they'll remember Lisa Snyder for the role. Maharajh's wide-eyed floor-scuffling was funny at first, but it was he that brought tinges of tragedy to the play with his panicky final scene and his ultimate fate.

And although I didn't go through every member of the cast, I could. They were all extraordinary.

Longstreet's theater-in-the-round set up makes scenery a tricky venture at best, but Theatre USC usually comes through. Kim Jennings' first design at USC is quite successful. Particularly good was the lion's habitat in Act I. The gorgeous cloth tree lent the set exactly the right touch without being cumbersome. The set change in Act I was admirably carried off with humor.

Richard Jennings orchestrates each aspect of this production seamlessly, and in the final analysis it just looked fabulous.

*Androcles and the Lion* will playing at

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