'THE FOLLIES OF HISTORY' SETS A ROLLLICKING PACE

By MIKE REYNOLDS

The Rice Follies of '58 is not educational. It is not a chamber music concert, nor was meant to be. (But I can think of no stage play that has ever claimed to be educational.)

No Doubt, Now

There has been some doubt since the opening of Hamman Hall as to what purpose and for whom the stage was built. The Follies has definitely claimed the stage for the students, and deserves a capacity audience through Saturday night.

Fast-Paced Fun

Director Frank Dent has staged two acts of low comedy that roll along at a fast pace, with the minimum of hesitation. Writers Roy Russel and Ginger Purington are amusing without being vulgar; taste has not been sacrificed for humor. Their burlesque of history is cleverly divided between the glory that was Egypt and the grandeur that was the medieval castle. A certain unity is gained through the witty, sophisticated narration of Drs. Nielsen and Davies.

Antony and Cleopatra

The first act is concerned with the historically sacred visit of Mark Antony to Egypt and his subsequent seduction by the wily Cleopatra. Neville Quarry, an architect from Australia, portrays Antony with a poise and wit seldom seen on the Rice stage.

Wit and Abandon

Mr. Quarry's timing and stage manner has the air of practiced sophistication; even in bombast he does not lose his command of the stage. His opposition is Izzy Williamson, who plays Cleopatra with an abandon that fills the theater. When the two are together there is little room for supporting actors.

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Naivete and Blue Eyes

This, however, is something of an injustice to the romantic qualities of Bev Montgomery and Terry Koonce, who are together as stand-ins for Antony and Cleo. The naivete of Bev's blue eyes would melt the heart of a Roman. In the meantime, and between times, Pert Virtanen, a restored Shakespearian, engineers the action of the act as Antony's adviser Enobarbus.

Gargantuan Antics

In the second act sophistication gives way to the slap-stick, rubber-faced, gargantuan antics of Bob Seiler and his Nasty Knights. Although it cannot be tied down to a specific event, the names of Damselia, Percival, Tramtrist, and Launcelittle call forth a general mock heroic on the days when knighthood flowered and maidens did otherwise.

In Shazam Castle

Within the dark confines of Shazam Castle the action bounces forward to win a princess, to kill a king, to raise a drawbridge, and to amuse the audience in an unexpected manner. Princess Ann Bartlett sings demurely from the confinement of her wheel chair, while Prince Launcelittle's preoccupation with "Up Drawbridge" seasons potpourri to taste. Throughout it all the baritone of Oliver Pennington confuses the plot in both song and jest.

Falters But Never Stops

As a whole the Follies moves rather well. A fast pace is set that sometimes falters, and slows, but does not stop. Wiggling dancing girls and courtly minuettes are held to a minimum, and are performed with un-precedented co-ordination under the tutelage of Tommy Lu Storm. Rice cliches

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Original Music and Lyrics

One of the outstanding features of Follies ’58 is the original music and lyrics of Gene Myers and Fred Specht. Their combo reflects the stage action and complements it, instead of diverting attention. If the action is sometimes forced, if the end is not inevitable, this is as it should be in a burlesque. Amusing, entertaining, but not educational — this is the Follies of ’58.