

LAW AND ENTERTAINMENT

THEATER *By Jeanne Lieberman*

'Pretty' Hefty Dose of Beauty Pageantry

Pretty Faces

BY: Robert W. Cabell

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY: Robert W. Cabell

DIRECTOR: Gene Foote

CAST: Margaret Dyer, Lynn Halverson, Kathleen Rosamond Kelly and others

WHERE: Actors Outlet Theatre, 120 West 28th St. Telephone 869-3530

PRETTY FACES starts out looking like a mistake and ends up surprisingly entertaining. Ambitiously dedicated "to change the concept of beauty... what counts is the heart and the mind," this spunky mini-musical is to be commended for avoiding the path of obvious fat jokes in the beauty pageant for "the large and lovely" competing for "Miss Global Glamour Girl." Teetering on the edge of taste and sensitivity, it avoids sentimentality in dealing with what medical research now classifies as a disease, stating that genetic make-up predetermines body type and contour and only 2 percent to 3 percent of overweight people can effectively change their long-term appearance.

Author/composer Robert Cabell avoids what could be a very predictable and unoriginal beauty contest scenario by not verbalizing the obvious, relying heavily (no pun intended) on the visual to create dramatic uniqueness as these six "Clunkerellas" courageously appear in George Bergeron's most unflattering outfits with egos and ambitions as large as their frames.

Co-hosted by a beefy, battling couple of beauties, Lynn Halverson, a "diva deluxe," the most professional of the cast, proves that big and beautiful can co-exist. Charles Mandracchia, muscularly handsome as her beautiful-but-dumb paramour, pouts, "Don't patricide

me," as he pursues her while others pursue him, inspiring a very reverse sexist song "How Do You Like Your Men." Michael Winther is perfect as the lovestruck assistant to the convincingly neurotic pageant director, Ron Meier, who screams at these "left-footed milkmaids" that "this is a beauty pageant, not a cow patch!"

Closely following the **Chorus Line** format, each character reveals, through song, his or her *raison d'être*. One hilarious, poignant number vocalizes their common nightmare, getting a date... and a dress for "Too Plump For Prom Night" ending with "lock the door, pace the floor, eat some more." Outstanding among the bevy of bountiful beauties is the laughably lascivious Liz Leisek; Amy Jo Phillips, lending new meaning to "fat 'n sassy"; the charming Kathleen Kelly of the beautiful face; the operatic Margaret Dyer, who responds to obscene phone calls; the dramatic Amy Ryder seeking daddy's acceptance; and the homespun Heather Stokes.

Director/choreographer Gene Foote utilizes Peter Rogness' ingenious use of space projecting an uptown pace and slickness and even a modicum of glitz. Unfortunately, there seems to be a rash of off key-ed-ness, which could be attributed to the generally substandard voices, odd musical moments or sound distortion.

Singing their theme song "42-32-42" awkwardly at first, then proudly at the finale, the girls actually looked Lane Bryant lovely as they sang "not withstanding shape and size — the girls Reubens immortalized." While not an anthem for the overweight, there is a nourishing amount of good songs and commentaries for the calorie conscious as well.

Entertainment Update is edited by
Stuart M. Wise