

by Terry Helbing

Once on This Island

Book and Lyrics by Lynn Ahrens

Music by Stephen Flaherty

Booth Theater

Pretty Faces

by Robert W. Cabell

Actors Outlet Theater

Pretty Faces is referred to as "the large and lovely musical," and while its present off-Broadway status can accommodate only a relatively small-scale production, it is a relatively lovely production about women who are not exactly classic fashion-model material.

We meet these women at a seemingly unlikely place—a beauty contest! Six women are vying for the title "Miss Global Glamour Girl," and we see them as they prepare for the pageant during the first act, and while the pageant is happening during the second. We also meet some of the pageant staff, including the first Global Glamour Girl, the master of ceremonies, and the pageant choreographer. We become acquainted with the various women's hopes and dreams, as well as the romantic aspirations of the staff.

The show has several appealing musical numbers, ranging from the hysterically funny contestants' lament, "Too Plump For Prom Night," to one contestant's funny talent selection, "Song For Jesus," to the moving song sung by the black contestant (and wouldn't you know she'd be the one to win the talent competition), "Purple Hearted Soldiers."

THEATER

Without being privvy to the sexual preference of the author, there is nevertheless obvious gay sensibility at work in this musical, ranging from song lyrics (one song mentions "into leather, into lace"), the runing bit of a phone freak making obscene calls to the backstage phone, to several occurrences of dishy humor. Even actor Charles Mandracchia has to display his health club membership on a couple of occasions.

But the ultimate example of gay sensibility in the musical is that the women accept themselves as who they are and the way they are; they have come out to—and accepted—who they have chosen to be. There is a joke about running out of Mallomars during the pageant, but there are none of the obvious pandering references to programs like Jenny Craig or diets like Nutrisystem. It would not have been surprising, given this sensibility, to hear references to *Fat Liberation*.

Given this country's obsession with the body beautiful, and the superficiality of being obsessed with weight (other than its health concerns), it's hard to tell how much of a future this musical will have, but it is relatively appealing, whether or not you're a member of Girth and Mi th. ■