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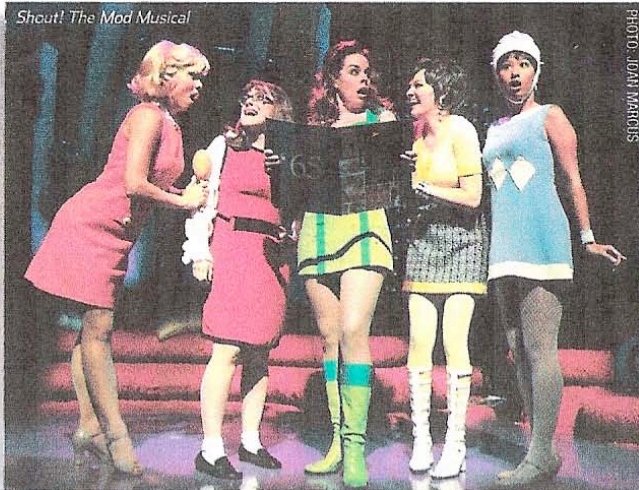
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THEATER



Manhattan Madcaps of 1924 *Shout! The Mod Musical* *John Bull's Other Island*

Symphony Space launched their *Summer Stock* on Broadway series with *Manhattan Madcaps of 1924*, a Rodgers & Hart revue that, although well-meaning, was ultimately more meandering than madcap. Billed as a newly discovered "lost" musical by the esteemed songwriting team, the show boasted terrific songs but was saddled with a ridiculous script by Artistic Director Isaiah Sheffer. Granted, the shows in the 1920s were certainly fluff, but Sheffer didn't do Rodgers and Hart any favors with the tedious dialogue he gave to the four couples in *Madcaps*, all of whom were searching for love...and real estate. The cast was fine—if not especially distinguished—with one promising discovery in Nick Verina, whose performance of "Spring Is Here" was a lovely highlight of the show. The music of Rodgers & Hart was the real star of *Madcaps* and the excellent work of musical director Lanny Meyers made up for Regina Larkin's distracting choreography.

Another revue that suffers from too much talking is *Shout! The Mod Musical* which—somewhat fittingly—has taken up residence in the former home of *Menopause The Musical* at the Julia Miles Theater. *Shout!* purports to chart the dawn of the Women's Liberation movement through song, but it's actually just an excuse to cover Petula Clark, Dusty Springfield and Shirley Bassey's greatest hits of the 1960s. On David Gallo's fabulous set wearing costumes by Philip Heckman that wonderfully evoke the swinging '60s of London, *Shout!*'s cast of five women work their collective asses off performing David Lowenstein's zippy, non-

stop choreography. Marie-France Arcilla, Erin Crosby, Julie Dingman Evans, Erica Schroeder and (at the performance I saw) Casey Clark all have terrific voices and knock themselves out vocally in what must be an exhausting 95-minute workout. The problem is the tedious transitional material they're given in-between songs ranging from cute *Laugh In*-style jokes to long, rambling letters that each girl reads to an advice columnist (voiced by the great Carole Shelley). It's way too much talk for a show in which the music is the true star, making *Shout!* 20 minutes too long and loaded with a tad too much feminism for its own good. Still, the songs are heavenly and the girls are fabulous—you be the judge.

As for Project Shaw, the jury is in. Producer/director/actor David Staller's monumental quest to do readings of everything George Bernard Shaw ever wrote for the stage (free of charge!) has become a jewel in New York's theater crown. This month's offering, *John Bull's Other Island*, is a rarity in the Shaw canon: a tale of an Englishman and an Irishman and their desire to annex Ireland as profit-making real estate at the expense of its people and culture (Shaw was way ahead of his time—even in 1904). The piece was an utter delight, featuring spectacular performances by Broadway hunk Marc Kudisch and television star Victor Slezak as the show's rapacious partners. Brian Murray, Kate Baldwin, Barrett Foa and Simon Kendall rounded out the rest of Staller's expertly selected company. Up next: *The Apple Cart* in September and *Misalliance* in October. It's the greatest ticket in town and the price is definitely right. **N**

Shout! plays at *The Julia Miles Theater* (424 W 55th St, 212-239-6200). Project Shaw plays at *The Players Club* (16 Gramercy Park So, 212-475-6116).

BY DAVID HURST

