

'Annie' charms with hope and laughter



ERIK SEGALL
Life

Ending the 56th Season of the Broadway Theatre League, "Annie" enchanted Memorial Hall Tuesday night.

And with the heroine belting out "Too-mah-rah, too-mah-rah" in a New York accent, who among the 1,100 seated in the audience couldn't help but wonder the outcome of the ensuing political battle in the Empire State.

For 40 years, the musical "Annie" has been enthralling and uplifting audiences nationwide, and Tuesday night was no different.

Heidi Grey, in her national debut, deftly portrayed the vivacious red-headed orphan girl with both crowd favorites, "It's the Hard Knock Life" and "Tomorrow."

Gilgamesh Taggart embodied an imposing operatic baritone

Oliver Warbucks, and the fatherly bond was clearly evident both on and off stage between him and his adorable co-star.

Chloe Tiso, as Grace Farrell, depicted the moral rectitude necessary to guide Warbucks' transformation from crass misanthrope to loving father by the end of the musical.

Lynn Andres, as the terrible Miss Harrington, stole scene after scene with her wild antics, and "Easy Street" certainly was the liveliest number of the production.

Oh, and the dog! Sandy's yawn mid-scene, perhaps the only one bored at Memorial Hall, fulfilled the trifecta uttered by the Shakespearean Philip Henslowe, "Comedy, love, and a bit with a dog. That's what people want!"

The set designs magnificently portrayed a dingy orphanage, the Brooklyn Bridge and even the White House's Oval Office.

The twelve-piece orchestra, directed by Kelly Ann Lambert, didn't miss a beat and provided

the main element for an authentic live production atmosphere.

Political humor kept the audience laughing with lines such as the reference to FDR: "He's a Democrat, but he's a human being, too!"

Played by Jeffery B. Duncan, the presence of the American president on stage emphasized the modern themes of homelessness, economic hardship and absentee parenting.

With the ensemble cast's transformation from hobos to aristocratic servants to presidential advisers, the American dream of class mobility became quite apparent.

The only thing missing was a comparison of Annie's Hillary-like spunkiness to Warbucks' Trumpesque wealth, and perhaps a nod to Bernie's dogged tenacity, yet the playhouse is no place for politics.

Catch next season at Memorial Hall when Pueblo shall host three more Broadway productions: "Pippin," "42nd Street," and "Once."