

## AN ORIGINAL MUSICAL

## 'Booth Is Back In Town' Will Be Produced Here By Yale Dramat

The Yale Dramatic Association will produce a new musical entitled "Booth is Back in Town!" on the weekends of May 11, 12, and 13, and June 8, 9, and 10, at the University Theater.

The Dramat's tradition of presenting each spring an original musical of high calibre written by undergraduates was begun some 10 years ago, and the warm reception accorded it by Dramat audiences, particularly by New Haven area residents, has assured its continuation.

"Booth is Back in Town" was written by Austin Pendleton (book), James Massengale (music), and Peter Bergman (lyrics), and was chosen over three other musicals in a six-week competition. Leland Starnes, the director, has received the unmixed acclaim of critics and audiences alike for his recent Dramat productions of "Camino Real" and "Thieves' Carnival."

## Based on Actor's Life

"The show is based on a period of about a year in the life of the young Edwin Booth, who was to become the greatest American actor of the 19th century, perhaps of all time," said Pendleton, who with Bergman, received enthusiastic reviews for their book and lyrics to last spring's Dramat musical, "Tom Jones."

"The play follows the 16-year-old Edwin," Pendleton added, "as he jolts and rushes through

city after city on the nation's pre-Civil War theater circuit with his touring father, the uprooted English actor Junius Brutus Booth.

"Caught up in the restless spirit of the early 1850's, the plot surges from the brawling saloons to the filthy hotels, from the peaceful family farm to a snow-bound mining camp, from a sea chanty's strident atonalities in waterfront Philadelphia to a spiritual's throaty harmonies on the Mississippi.

"Booth and his son have not gone far from their Maryland farm when Edwin discovers that the gallant condescension and the bursts of unselfish love which have always characterized his father's behavior at home and for which the boy has more worshipped than loved him are giving way to shabby immorality.

"Edwin's disillusionment and subsequent development of a new, stronger character become the main dramatic theme in the latter half of the play. As the elder Booth declines, the young man rises up on his own with the strength and brilliance that are to catapult him to greatness."

"Much of the music and lyrics have been written in the popular styles of the play's period," said lyricist Bergman, "and we have sought to invest them with an aura of authenticity. Jim Massengale and I have studied the songs of the 1850s as painstakingly as Austin has dug through the chronicles of the Booths."

ngly as Austin has dug through the chronicles of the Booths."

## Not Pure Period

"Of course," Massengale added, "our musical numbers are not more pure period pieces than is Austin's script. We would not have wanted to retreat totally into the 19th century even, if we had been able to do so. Just as Austin uses many potent modern dramatic techniques, Peter and I are drawing on present-day knowledge to give our numbers the greatest possible effectiveness."

Massengale, a Yale senior, is an honors major in music composition, and, like Pendleton, whose libretto will be submitted as his year-long project to the Scholars of the House Program, Massengale's score and orchestrations comprise a part of the work toward his degree.

The role of Edwin Booth is to be created by Philip G. Proctor, who will be remembered for his highly praised appearance in the title role of "Tom Jones," and Mary Jane Wilson, who played opposite Proctor in last year's musical, will take the part of Adelaide Booth. Joanna Glass, who was Clarissa Seagram in "Tom Jones," plays Mary Ann Booth.

Supporting roles will be played by such well-known Yale actors as John M. Badham (Baron de Charlus in "Camino Real"), Eleanor Evans ("Camino's" Gypsy), Dick Goodyear (Dupont-DuFort, Sr., in "Thieves' Carnival"),

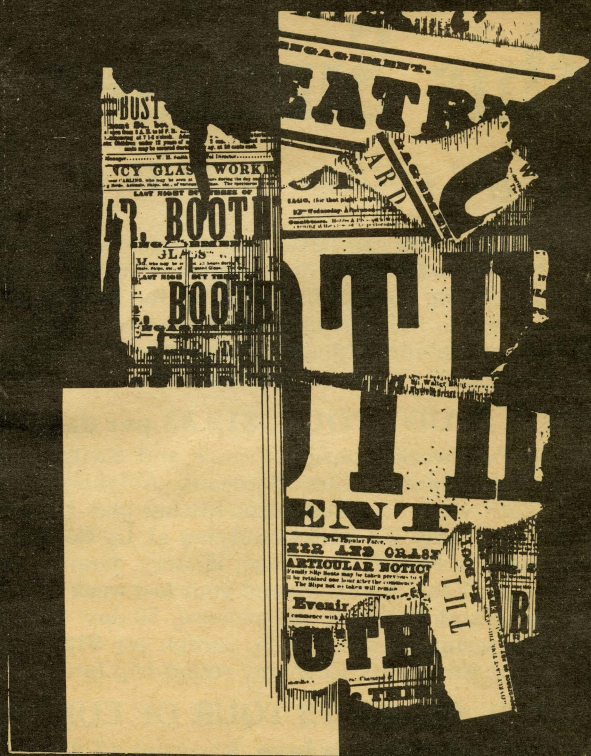
Frank Geraci (Casanova in "Camino"), and Alfred S. Goldfield ("Camino's" Mr. Gutman).

John Conklin and Katherine Prescott Ganzer, who designed, respectively, the sets and costumes for last February's "Thieves' Carnival" are continuing in these capacities for "Booth is Back in Town!" and Geoffrey Waddell, the "Thieves' Carnival" choreographer will direct the dances for the current production, as he has for every

Dramat show of the past four years.

Peter Hunt will again design the lighting. "Booth is Back in Town!" represents Hunt's seventh lighting design for the Dramat and Conklin's 16th set design at the University Theater.

The Dramat box office at the Yale University Theater, 222 York Street, will be open every weekday afternoon and evening, beginning Monday. Tickets are priced at \$2.50 (balcony) and \$3.00 (orchestra). For reservations, call UN 5-4300.



# BOOTH IS BACK IN TOWN!

A New Musical  
 by Austin Pendleton, James  
 Massengale, and Peter Bergman  
 directed by Leland Starnes  
 College Weekend May 11 - 13  
 Box office now open 2-5, 7-9  
 University Theatre UN 5-4300

The Yale Dramatic Association

# Booth is Back in Town: New Musical Slant on Ante-Bellum America

by John H. Lahr

Junius Brutus Booth and son Edwin, the greatest, most provocative theatrical family ever to grace the American stage, make their New Haven debut at the University Theater tonight, bringing with them their whole troupe of rollicking, flamboyant and strangely tragic thespians, vintage 1850.

"Booth is Back in Town" does not fit into the common musical niche. It is a synthesis of a violently intense personal relationship between father and son, and the music that their personalities and the flavor of a rough and expanding



Phillip Proctor & Eleanor Evans  
Sing *About the Art of Acting*

America evoke. It attempts to create a tension between the exuberance and joy of the music and the serious dramatic characterization.

While the play is permeated with nostalgic moments of the early American heritage, it is by no means a burlesque of "the good old days."

At the very core of the play is the sense of rootlessness and vague yearnings which has characterized the American way of life and is especially conspicuous in the theatrical world. Beyond this, the play concentrates on one crucial year in the artistic and psychological development of Edwin Booth and his journey, with his eccentric, neurotic, and terribly famous father, into the sordid and rowdy frontier world.

Leland Starnes, the director of "Booth" had only kudos for the Dramat's newest venture. "The play shows an incredibly profound understanding of the characters and their relations to one another. I'm in love with everything everybody's doing."

The script, written by Austin Pendleton, has been carefully correlated with the score. James Massengale has arranged the music, with Peter Bergman creating the lyrics.

Attempting to capture the verve of the 1850's, Massengale and Bergman have arranged a score with strains of minstrel music, darky folk songs, and tinpanny piano running throughout the play. They have even provided a professional banjo player and a tuba to the orchestral ensemble.

The lyrics have posed problems because each song has had to have meaning for the actors and for their era and could not be simply an isolated theatrical invention. In "Booth" the songs are as important as the script, each an integral part of Edwin's psychic development. Bergman has mentioned that he "had to keep his lyric from oversimplifying the complex characters devolving on the stage and at the same time keep a natural simplicity, befitting the age."

Set designer, John Conklin, has created 11 complete sets spanning an architectural and atmospheric range from Maryland, New Orleans to California. Conklin pointed out that "because of the numerous changes of scenery, we have attempted to unify it in terms of color--basically black and red. The color tends to emphasize the stifling,



PHILLIP PROCTOR (left), as Edwin Booth, is forced to realize the sordid life of the theater world by his famous father Junius Booth (right), play by C.L. CARSON. (Photo by N.E. Jackson Jr.)

decadent atmosphere in the play." Conklin has also used large torn theatrical posters to suggest a "fading world of the theatre and Junius.

He has also used plush Victorian furniture and heavy velvet fabric in the sets to create an added mood of decay. The only problem is managing the timing and maneuvering of the sets.

Conklin pointed out that "the show was designed with the lighting in mind because we introduce smoke

to pick up the light and the beams take on a compositional effect." Not Without Woes

Besides organizational problems which are inevitable in a show as complex as "Booth," the Dramat has been in a race against time. They have had only one full dress rehearsal since taking the stage Monday. Pendleton pointed out that

wandering play without focus."

Since the play deals with the theater world and the personalities of actors, the characters, as Phillip Proctor, who plays Edwin, commented, "are easy to identify with, and actors find it more enjoyable and meaningful and consequently far more moving for the audience."

Mr. Starnes has called "Booth" a brilliantly written musical. But it is, as he has intimated, a new type of theatrical endeavor which may take time and patience to perfect.

the second act had been rehearsed for only two weeks and a new scene had been inserted as late as yesterday. Perhaps, Mr. Starnes put the problem most succinctly, "We haven't had the time to do, what we know we can do," he said.

Pendleton also mentioned that certain theatrical effects would have to stand the test of time. He pointed out that the sense of restlessness which motivates the Booth family, "can lead to a kind of rootless,

## The Theater In Review

# Dramat Premieres

## Musical About Booth

The spring production of the Yale Dramatic Association had a gala premiere performance at the University Theater last night when an original play with music, entitled "Booth Is Back in Town" captivated a first-night audience.

Fairly glowing with imaginative appeal, the play is the work of three seniors, Austin Pendleton, who wrote the book for last year's successful "Tom Jones" play; James Massengale, who composed the music, which is part of his work towards his degree, and Peter Bergman, who contributed this year's lyrics as well as those for "Tom Jones."

It is a gifted trio, and the production reflects hours and hours of research, creative ability and artistic skill.

According to the author, the play is based on the events which took place in the life of 16-year-old Edwin Booth the year he entered upon his career on the stage, a career which was to make him the greatest actor of the period.

There are many tender and revealing moments between young Edwin and his brilliant father, Junius Brutus Booth, who also sired John Wilkes Booth. John does not appear in the Yale play except in reference.

Through two acts and 15 scenes, the pre-Civil War period is given a picturesque presentation. Massengale's music retains the rousing, half-jig rhythms of the folk music of the day, plus the simple, melancholy ballads, with the extra excitement of interesting contemporary music moods. Bergman's lyrics run the whole gamut

of emotions in the simple language of the folk song.

Under the direction of Leland Starnes the play moves right along and if there was just too much play last night, it was, after all, a premiere, and there is plenty of time to trim off rough edges here and there.

Philip G. Proctor, a junior, who played the title role in Tom Jones, and whose summer stock experience has given him assurance, plays the young Edwin Booth with a beguiling charm.

Theodore L. Tarson, a Law student, as Junius Booth, has appeared in other Dramat performances as well as on the London stage and his performance was also smoothly professional.

It is a large cast, expertly chosen and each member is to be commended for giving such admiral support. Especially assisting the principals, was Joan DeVita as Asia Booth. Her rendition of the melancholy ballad, "The Green Lime Tree" was a highlight of the play.

In other excellent supporting roles were Alfred Goldfield as Mr. Wemyss; Dick Goodyear and John Badham as a couple of Shakespearean hams, Eleanor Evans as an aging actress and Marcia Hagen as the ingenue.

John Conklin designed the many scenes with Peter Hunt taking care of the lighting. Costumes were by Katherine Prescott Ganzer, choreography by Geoffrey Waddell and the orchestration was by Gordon Emerson. James Cunningham's musical direction kept the play at the proper exciting pitch.

—F.R.J.

# At The Theater —

## 'Booth Is Back In Town' Presented by Yale Dramatic Association as Original Musical

Book by Austin Pendleton; lyrics by Peter Bergman; music by Jim Massengale; presented by the Yale University Dramatic Association, with Philip Proctor, Theodore L. Tarson, Barbara Bossert, Eleanor Evans, Mary Jane Wilson, Dick Goodyear, John M. Badham, Marcia Hagen and others. Directed by Leland Starnes; scenery by John Conklin; costumes by Katherine Prescott Ganzer; choreography by Geoffrey Waddell; musical direction by Jim Cunningham and orchestrations by Gordon Emerson. At the University Theater.

An unduly sentimental and, almost, irrelevant, second act checked what appeared to be a runaway hit Thursday night at the Yale University Theater as the Yale Dramatic Association produced an original musical, "Booth is Back in Town."

The play, written by Yale senior Austin Pendleton, is based on the life of Edwin Booth, America's great actor in the Civil War period, when he is 16 and just becoming interested in the stage as a career.

The play's first act, although long, alternates mood in such a delightful manner that the length never becomes oppressive.

The second act, though far shorter, provides a heavy accent on sentimentality at the expense of the deftness characterizing the first act.

Much of the first act's success is due to the music, by Jim Massengale and orchestrated by Gordon Emerson, with lyrics by Peter Bergman, which anticipated each changing mood of the piece and greatly helped in setting the pace of the nine scenes.

This easy transition between moods can also be credited to the direction by Leland Starnes.

Philip Proctor, playing the lead in the second consecutive Dramat musical production, does an excellent job as young Edwin, catching every mood of the uncertain adolescent.

His father, Junius Brutus Booth, also a well-known actor of his time, is played by Theodore L. Tarson, a Law School student who has an expressive face but a rather wooden delivery of his lines.

Perhaps one of the troubles in the elder Booth's part is in the writing, which doesn't provide enough rapport between father and son to account for the former's great influence in determining Edwin's interest in the theater.

One can't avoid the impression that Edwin could have learned far more about life from ingenue Jenny Joanne, played delightfully by Marcia Hagen, and such a development of theme could have prevented such anguished cries from young Booth as "Father, why didn't you tell me you were going to die?" in the second act.

Two Shakespearean character actors, Mr. Spears and Mr. Page, were expertly portrayed by Dick Goodyear and John M. Badham respectively.

Versatile and unobtrusive sets were designed by John Conklin. Choreography by Geoffrey Waddell, effortless in the first act, encountered difficulties later as confusion briefly reigned in a large dance scene.

Costumes by Katherine Prescott Ganzer and lighting by Peter Hunt were both executed with professional ease.

# The



# Aisle Seat

by Leonard M. Chazen

**BOOTH IS BACK IN TOWN!** an original play by Austin Pendleton. Lyrics by Peter Bergman. Music by Jim Massengale. Directed by Leland Starnes. Settings by John Conklin. Lighting by Peter Hunt. Costumes by Katherine Prescott Ganzer. Choreography by Geoffrey Waddell. Orchestrations by Gordon Emerson. Musical direction by Jim Cunningham.

"Booth Is Back In Town!" which opened at the Dramat last night, is an exceedingly ambitious musical, which succeeds in examining at length the famed Booth acting family and the folk culture of mid-nineteenth century America without sacrificing its uniformly high quality or losing the attention of its audience.

However, there is a latent division of interests between the book, which concerns itself primarily with the relationship between Edwin Booth and his father Junius, and the score whose main interest is the Great American South, West, and Middle West. During the first act, thanks in part to Leland Starnes' superb direction, the two themes are almost flawlessly integrated; and the split is not apparent. But as the second act begins, Austin Pendleton's book clearly becomes the dominant element; and there are moments when the musical numbers appear to be an unnecessary addition to a perfectly adequate straight drama.

If the book and score are not always in perfect harmony, however, there is no question about their individual merits. Mr. Pendleton has written a profound and moving account of Edwin's coming of age under his father's rather unprotective wing as they tour the country with Julius's supporting cast. He has succeeded in making living characters out of the two men who paradoxically represent to each other a constant threat and at the same time a hope for some sort of meaningful life. Particularly well done are the final scenes in which their conflict has its resolution and Edwin painfully reaches a mature understanding of his father's anomalous nature.

Although the score does not always keep pace with the book during the second act, it emerges as a perceptive and engaging rendering of the innocent gay spirits America had one-hundred years ago. Mr. Massengale succeeds (with the assistance of a highly active banjo in the orchestra pit) in evoking the feeling of the times without falling prey to the musical clichés that often haunt such efforts. Mr. Bergman has also avoided the obvious and the cute, except when putting them to outrageous good use in his colloquial version of Othello in "Round Clear Tones." Among their joint-efforts, "Letting My Feet Run Free" is an especially appealing treatment of a young boy's enthusiastic fantasies about the regions of the country he's never seen.

The lion's share of the credit for "Booth's" failure to become tedious despite its three hours of running time and its almost two-hour first act, belongs to Mr. Starnes' brisk direction. He has managed to stage frequent switches from intimate family encounters to raucous crowd scenes without losing the mood of the former or allowing the audience to lose the continuity of the play.

Much of the responsibility for maintaining the unity between the play's two themes rested with Philip Proctor. As Edwin Booth, the fledgling actor, who discovers America as he grows up, he is the most important link between the two; and it was his success last night in switching from the role of Edwin, the son and developing actor, to Edwin, the tourist and entertainer, that prevented the latent schizophrenia which might have marred the first act from ever becoming serious. His performance in the difficult scenes which had him and his father at each other's neck were not always very delicately shaded; but he was entirely convincing as the starry-eyed youth on the Maryland farm.

Theodore L. Tarson was properly troubled and egocentric as his father, Junius; and Joanna Glass gave a perceptive and touching performance as Junius's wife, back on the farm. Eleanor Evans, Dick Goodyear, and John M. Badham as the old troupers who befriend Edwin were all first-rate in their supporting roles, especially during "The American Fireman" when, along with Edwin, they treated the audience to some early 19th-century melodrama.

Marcia Hagen was properly endearing as Edwin's sweetheart, Jenny Joanne; and Mary Jane Wilson was perfect as a *femme fatale* with a heart of gold.

The choreography by Geoffrey Waddell was imaginatively conceived; but unfortunately, the execution was never up to the conception. The sets, by John Conklin, which were responsible in large measure for creating the atmosphere of the 19th-century theater, were strikingly done and clearly had their effect on the audience. The lighting by Peter Hunt and the costumes by Katherine Prescott Ganzer also contributed to a successfully lavish production.

# "Booth Is Back in Town"

## Written by 3 Yale Lads

An original play with music that may go into Broadway orbit from Yale Dramat is "Booth Is Back in Town." Its second weekend on the home base will be June 8, 9 and 10.

About the young days of Edwin Booth, America's greatest actor of the 19th century, the play was written by three Yale seniors:- Austin Pendleton, James Massengale and Peter Bergman. Directing is Leland Starnes.

Philip G. Proctor plays the

title role with such other well known Dramat talent as Mary Jane Wilson, JoAnna Glass, John M. Badham, Eleanor Evans, Dick Goodyear, Frank Gerasi and Alfred B. Goldfield. Philip Laney is Dramat president and on his staff:- David C. Honneus, Peter C. Saccio, Ernesto Alvarez, Edward K. Conklin, John M. Cole, John C. Hilgenberg and Thomas B. Ligon.



# 'Mr. Booth' Result of 3-Man Collaboration

## Trio Calmly Waits Performance That May Seal Its Fate

By J. GORDON BULLETT

"We want Booth! We want Booth!" — a crowd that fills the stage of the Adams Memorial Theater in Williamstown, where the new musical, "Mr. Booth," is being readied for its first professional presentation tonight, cries out.

But something is not quite right and a sharp command from director Nikos Psacharopoulos brings stage proceedings to a halt, only to start over and over again until it is just right.

### 3 Shadowy Figures

In the darkened auditorium, behind the last row of seats, are three shadowy figures, standing apart, but with a strong, if invisible bond drawing them together.

These three shadowy figures are the young men responsible for the writing of "Mr. Booth" and on the success of the musical's presentation by the Williamstown Theater may depend a Broadway or off-Broadway production of the work.

The young men are Austin Pendleton, 23, who wrote the book; Peter Bergman, also 23, who is responsible for the lyrics; and Arthur Rubinstein, the "old man" of the trio — he is an aged 25 — who has done the music.

Sitting talking to the three, while lights on stage are being adjusted, one wonders at their calmness only to be told, with a certain degree of "what is to be, will be," that it is the calmness of exhaustion.

Mr. Pendleton, who does most



**CALMLY WAITING** — The three young men who collaborated to produce "Mr. Booth," the musical that will open this evening at Williamstown Theater, wait calmly for audience judgment on their

work. From left, they are Arthur Rubinstein who composed the music, Arthur Bergman, author of the lyrics, and Austin Pendleton, who wrote the book.

of the talking for the trio although the others are by no means silent partners, tells how work on the present "Mr. Booth" started more than a year and a half ago.

There was a previous version. At first the collaboration was carried on by long-distance phone and, while Mr. Pendleton was in Greece last year, by bulky letters. Roughly three months ago the young men got together and

since that time the work has gone on in close contact although each has worked separately, the results of these separate efforts finally ending up on a conference table.

Both Bergman and Rubinstein insist that most of the research for the musical has been done by Pendleton, but he likewise persists that the other two are also responsible for much background study and under his insistence

they agree they may have been responsible for some, but the major credit must go to their co-worker.

### Result of Evolution

All are in agreement, however, that the final product is the result of evolution and of trial and error and also agree that the musical that will be seen starting tonight was not put together in its final form until a week and a half ago and that even since that time there have been changes made—changes that have been necessitated by the demands and limitations of the theater.

Some song included in the original score, have been dropped because they did not fit into the period of the work while other songs have been written or revised to conform to this period in the lives of Junius and Edwin Booth. Mr. Pendleton points out that the musical never strays from the period because the character of the central figure, that is Junius Booth, is such a strong one that it just will not permit any straying. Mr. Bergman and Mr. Rubinstein are quick to concur with this statement.

Asked if the music is "way out," the three answer in unison that it is definitely not, that it, too, is flavored by the period and that it is very foot-tapping, singable music.

### With Strong Bonds

Tonight the curtain will go up on "Mr. Booth." Tonight there will be no stopping of the show by Mr. Psacharopoulos if something should not be to his liking. Tonight there will be three shadowy figures, each standing alone in the rear of the Adams Memorial Theater, three persons, each alone with his thoughts, but three persons with strong bonds.

Tonight, three young people brought together through their studies and work at Yale, will await the decision of a first night audience. Is it good? Is it bad? Will it survive for Broadway? Will "Mr. Booth" be still-born? It is expected that some New York agents will be in the audience — will their reactions be favorable or unfavorable?

Three young men will stand quietly in the back of the theater. They may pace a little, but there will be the calmness of exhaustion, exhaustion earned in the trials and tribulations of artistic production.