

Tony awards, it has won critics' praises as one of the most uproariously funny musicals in recent years. A tale of greed, love, and corruption, it tells the story of scarce resources being manipulated by big business.

Running August 4 through September 2 is the timeless classic *Cabaret*, which brings to life the pre-World War II era of Germany. Filled with torch songs and well-loved dance numbers, *Cabaret* was on Broadway the year ASGT opened in 1966.

After initially starting in what is now the William Paca House Garden, the group started leasing its present location at 143 Compromise Street after its first year. In 1990 it was fortunate to purchase the property for \$1 from Anne Arundel County, with the stipulation that it continue to operate as a community theater engaged in cultural and educational activities.

ASGT is an all-volunteer organization whose operating income is supplemented by grants from the City of Annapolis, the Arts Council of Anne Arundel County, and the Maryland State Arts Council.

"There is an ever-evolving pool of talent. It is never the same twice," explains Kirby. Auditions are open to the public and are advertised in the local media. Since the performing season lasts 3 months, the remaining 9 months are spent in preparation.

Tickets can be reserved in advance but must be picked up and paid for by 8 p.m., 30 minutes before the performance. Adult admission is \$15 and students and seniors pay \$12. For more information call the box office at (410) 268-9212 or visit the Web site at www.summergarden.com.

—Nadja Maril

Henri Matisse—Jazz



Henri Matisse. Horse, rider and clown, from the illustrated book *Jazz*, 1947. The Baltimore Museum of Art: The Cone Collection.

Entombed in an interior room of the Baltimore Museum of Art is a fragile document that has been hidden away for years. Its sensitivity to light prevents it from being displayed often, making the current exhibit an unusual delight that art lovers shouldn't miss.

The exhibit contains the pages of a rare unbound version of *Jazz*, an art book by Henri Matisse published in limited quantity in 1947. Each illustrated page is laid out serially under the protective glass, interspersed with pages of text written in Matisse's large, flowing cursive hand.

"We think of *Jazz* as one of Matisse's greatest books," says Jay Fisher, deputy director of curatorial affairs and senior curator, prints, drawings, and photographs, at the Baltimore Museum of Art. Fisher put together the exhibit, arranging the pictures in the order in which they appear in the book. "The book format is

very important to artists like Matisse," he says. "They allow the artist to determine what order the pictures are viewed in."

The dim lighting lends the solemnity of a church to the high-ceilinged gallery. Two glass display cases stand like tombs equidistant from the entrance. More cases line the edge of the room, holding the book pages like scripture. As your eyes adjust, the colors jump from their glass sarcophagi—amorphous, glowing images that overwhelm the senses.

Matisse designed the book's pictures by pasting colored paper cutouts onto a white piece of paper. A technique called *pochoir*, wherein each color is painted thickly by hand through stencils, was used to create a distinctly layered effect similar to the original collages. Since each illustration required numerous stencils and paint applications, the first edition of 250 prints required immense amounts of

A Rare Art Book is on Exhibit for the First Time in 10 Years at the Baltimore Museum of Art



Henri Matisse, *Icarus*, from the illustrated book *Jazz*, 1947. The Baltimore Museum of Art; The Cone Collection.

time and work by a series of skilled craftsmen to reproduce the original.

Matisse first used *decoupages*, or paper cutouts, as a time-saving device. When planning a painting, he would make shapes out of brightly colored paper that he could easily move around the canvas, allowing him to experiment with color and layout without having to repaint every time.

It was not until a botched stomach cancer surgery left him unable to stand at an easel that Matisse turned to *decoupage* completely. He became enchanted with the medium, writing: "I felt like the traveler who had crossed the frontier into a new country—leaving his baggage behind." Fisher calls it "sculpting with scissors," where two-dimensional cutouts become a three-dimensional image.

Jazz was originally a book about the circus, as some of the image titles reveal;



Henri Matisse, *Circus*, from the illustrated book *Jazz*, 1947. The Baltimore Museum of Art; The Cone Collection.

e.g., *The Sword Swallower* and *The Knife Thrower*. "[Artists] saw elements of the circus performers in their own lives," Fisher says. "People wanted to see them perform, but afterwards wanted nothing to do with them."

Matisse, in keeping with his initial theme, entitled the book *La Cirque*. It was the book's publisher, Tériade, who chose the ultimate title. He felt Matisse's energy and variation in the illustrations paralleled that of a jazz musician. *Jazz* seems strikingly fitting when you see the paintings, despite the artist's original intention.

To fully absorb the pictures takes work. At first they appear random and abstract, but with enough time (and a couple of helpful informational plaques), the images coagulate and emerge from the jumble. What was senseless now makes sense. The images speak loudly in the quiet gallery—a secret wink between

artist and viewer.

These images linger in the mind after you step out of the dark room, for at first it's too bright to see clearly. Blinking and rubbing your eyes in the sunlight, you begin to find the familiar patterns of color and shape in your surroundings. The cerebral filters pop into place along with the pupils, forming solids from the abstractions surrounding you. This is the *Jazz* of everyday life.

Jazz by Henri Matisse, a part of the Modern Masters Series of exhibitions, can be viewed May 3 through August 27 at the Baltimore Museum of Art, 10 Art Museum Drive, Baltimore. Call (443) 573-1700 or visit www.artbma.org for more information.

—Conal Darcy