

City Players' Roman comedy is a winner



KEN Latham (with helmet) as the fantastic Captain Miles Glorious in the City Players' comedy musical "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum", which opened at the National Theatre on Thursday. Supporting (literally) the gallant captain are (left to right) Roman soldiers Tony Hankins, Mike Romancia, Nick Donne and John Tirotsso.

A funny thing happened all right!

A FUNNY evening is just what one needs to make it less of a hard day's night—and the Nairobi City Players musical-comedy, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* goes a long way to meeting that requirement.

On Thursday the Nairobi City Players' production of *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* opened at the National Theatre.

For all who like their comedy swift, slick and professional, albeit simple, this show is a must.

Directed by Benny Goodman, who also does the musical direction, from the moment the curtain goes up on the truly magnificent set the evening promises to be a winner—and it is a promise that is kept to the final curtain. Slapstick comedy it may be, but good slapstick can be funny and much of this show is very funny indeed.

Glynn Davies as Pseudolos—the slave whose efforts to arrange his young master's love-life and thus as a reward win his own freedom, keep him twisting and turning through a plethora of complications—rightly steals the honours.

But the rest of the cast do not allow him to filch these too easily and Keith Gristock, particularly as Hysterium, gives a masterly performance.

I am told that this is Keith's first time on stage and if this is true then his professionalism is all the more remarkable. Bryan Epsom too gives a lovely portrayal of Lycus, the cowardly money-grabbing brothelkeeper—indeed none of the players fails to uphold his role, although the voices of some of the less experienced actors do tend to get lost sometimes in the appalling acoustics of the National

Theatre.

The singing I would describe as no more than adequate—with the notable exception, of course, of Marlene Docherty who has a lovely voice—but although this is billed as a musical comedy, the music is not, in fact, of great importance and the shortcomings in this department do not detract from the overall show.

Everything else in this production only adds further to the enjoyment—in passing, I must mention the costumes, particularly of the glamorous courtesans—and all-in-all this is an evening I can thoroughly

recommend. Twelve more performances continue until November 20.

Mary Hayne returns to this column next week and I shall bow out with a reminder of the Harambee production at the National Theatre on Sunday, November 14, in aid of the Theatre Appeal Fund.

As I mentioned last week, this is to be a musical evening with a brass band concert first, followed by a condensed version of *H.M.S. Pinafore*. Bookings have already opened.

EDWARD BRYMER