Sauvageau lets loose in musical role

by Jack Healy

Singing has become an enjoyable activity for Jeff Sauvageau, who is Valentine in “Two Gentlemen of Verona,” which is playing in the Eppley Little Theater at 8 p.m. tonight, Saturday and Sunday.

Sauvageau describes his second lead role in the rock musical as a “free-spirited Elvis-type of guy. He’s a Mr. Macho. All the other roles are subdued, but with the guy I play, I can let loose.”

The Arts freshman does not let his acting and singing inexperience at Creighton hinder his performance. “I felt inferior at first,” he said. “But a lot of other people in the play are freshmen. It took a while for us to get used to it. I forgot about it after our first month of practice.”

“Interested in sports”

Sauvageau, a Grand Rapids, Mich., native who has lived in Omaha for 13 years, is hardly a newcomer to theater. Though. His singing talent was publicly revealed when he played Artful Dodger in his grade school’s production of “Oliver.” “I was not interested in singing at all at the time,” he said. “I was more interested in sports.”

Sauvageau renewed his interest in singing and acting during his sophomore year at Creighton Prep. He played Judas in Boys Town’s production of “Godspell,” and during his junior year, played Sancho in Prep’s “Man of La Mancha” as well as the lead in Prep’s “Pippin” his senior year.

Sauvageau also played George Gibbs in Marian High’s production of “Our Town” his junior year, a role lacking the song and dance to which he has become accustomed.

But Sauvageau said none of his previous roles is comparable to his role in “Two Gentlemen.” “Every night is so hard,” he said. “There is so much work. We usually work five or six hours a day, five days a week.”

Family involved

The Sauvageau family has been involved in music since Jeff’s grandfather sang tenor in opera. Jeff’s father and aunt sang in nightclubs.

Sauvageau is also interested in entertaining crowds in local bars. He is the lead singer for Finest Hour, a band that has been together for about a month. The group includes Arts freshmen Tim Krell and Chris Heaney and Business freshman Greg Boulay.

“We are going to try to do some bars,” Sauvageau said. “The money is all right. It’s really fun when the audience is so responsive. We have a lot of talent in the band.”

One would think, with all the singing Sauvageau has done, that his voice is finely trained. But he said he once took singing lessons for only three months. “I should take more because I sing from my throat and most others sing from their stomachs,” he said. “When I sing from my throat, I strain it.”

A strained throat has been a problem for Sauvageau and he said he has often lost his voice before a performance. He said his only remedy is to drink a lot of liquids. “I just have to go on,” he said.

Sauvageau said he is considering a major in theater, but is presently undecided. “I try not to think about it right now,” he said. “If I do, I get worried because there are so many people in theater. There are so many good actors. I’m just one that’s all right. I have a lot to learn.”