Review

‘Elephant Man’ stuns audience

By Elizabeth O’Keefe
Entertainment Editor

“Man’s inhumanity to man” — at this point in the semester you have heard this familiar theme (or been a victim of it) several times. You won’t fully comprehend it, however, until you experience the Fine and Performing Arts Department’s production of “The Elephant Man,” being performed Oct. 3, 4, 9, 10 and 11 at 8 p.m. and Oct. 5 and 12 at 2:30 p.m. at the Performing Arts Center, 30th and Burt Streets.

Director Alan Klem presents Bernard Pomerance’s play based on the life of John Merrick, a deformed young man who rose from a freak in traveling sideshows to questions the grotesque nature of the society that had abandoned him.

Late 1880 setting

The setting is London, late 1880. Music by a cellist sets the mood...cruelty, injustice, cold, hard reality.

The characters are very different.

Ross, the pathetic freak-monger and Dr. Treves, Merrick’s “savior” and provider, both seek to profit from Merrick’s deformity — Ross consciously, and Treves, subconsciously.

Other characters, like Mrs. Kendal, a worldly actress; Bishop How, Merrick’s spiritual leader; and various socialites take part in Merrick’s socialization.

Religious social themes

Underlying religious, social and sexual themes surface occasionally, tempting the audience to explore deeper.

While actual slides of John Merrick are projected onto the stage, Brian Koken‌sparger, S.J., stuns the audience, gracefully acquiring the rigid deformities of “The Elephant Man.”

Make-up would clutter Koken‌sparger’s evolution from actor to misfortune. His energy and pain weaves throughout the audience.

Chilling, inhumane

Paul Dedinsky, arts sophomore, as Ross is chilling and inhumane. He also plays the aristocrat, Lord John and a hospital worker, Will, showing off his successful diversity as an actor.

Frederick Treves, played by Judson Jones, Arts junior, is sometimes confusing to follow, but gives a solid performance.

Margaret Dube, Arts sophomore, as Mrs. Kendal — a radiant, tender women who tries to find herself through caring for Merrick. Sincerity flows throughout her style.

Her beautifully tailored costumes are the creations of Sara Ryan, Paula Kamphaus and Carol Shug.

Thomas Anderson, S.J. and Allen Palacio designed the lighting for the show, adding to the intensity of the subject matter.

Sound effects by William Cook ring throughout the old warehouse embodying Merrick’s anguish.

“The Elephant Man” is a hot spark for many late night discussions.