

Murky and slow corrections are of no help to anyone

As a theatrical director, Bill Garber has been known to lose his cool on occasion. Actors can attest to that. As a newspaper reader, Garber can also blow his top. I can attest to that.

What caused Garber to go ballistic on us was the review of Casa Manana's most recent show, *Grand Hotel*. Garber thought it was outrageous that Casa's show received secondary play to a one-night performance by singer Michelle Shocked at the Caravan of Dreams. *Grand Hotel* was scheduled for a 12-performance run.

The Casa review was 5½ inches long, had a one-column headline and was accompanied by a photo 2 inches wide by 3½ inches deep. The Caravan review measured 6 inches in length, had a multicolumn head



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and a photo 8 inches wide by 5 inches deep. That's not all, fumed Farber. Casa seats 1,800, Caravan about 500.

"This is ridiculous," he said. "Once again it goes to show you that theater gets secondhand treatment in your Encore section."

I'm quite aware that Garber is not exactly viewing this thing through objective eyes. He recently retired after serving as director of the Fort Worth Theater for many years.

But I think his complaints have a lot of merit. Garber also realizes the problems that late-running shows present a newspaper staff trying to meet a deadline. He suggests that reviews for shows having long runs, such as those staged at Casa, be delayed a day so they can be given more space and better display.

Critic Perry Stewart, who wrote the review in question, agrees to a point. He would prefer doing a capsule review in Encore for the next day's editions and then come back the next day with a much more thoughtful review in the A&E (arts and entertainment) section.

And, now for the defense comes Lisa Kestler, editor of Encore.

She said the newspaper's design policies state that the Encore page will always have a dominant story. She said we went with the Shocked review because the photo was far superior to any of the publicity photos she had available for the Casa show.

Kestler also said we shouldn't sell Shocked short. "Michelle Shocked is a Texas native, nationally known for both her music and her outspokenness," Kestler said. "She hadn't played a solo concert in this area in at least three years."

Then she added for graybeards like me, "And, let's be realistic about it. Encore is geared to a young audience. They're more interested in a musician they've heard of than in Cyd Charisse in a musical set in Weimar, Germany."

She also noted that since Encore has been reduced to one page "space is tight."

That's a pretty good defense, Lisa, but I don't think it overcomes Garber's case.

We still have the vast difference in audience size and the number of performances. I have always thought that one of the primary reasons for a review of a performance is to help potential audience members decide whether the show is worth the bucks

they would have to spend.

And this isn't the first time we have been criticized this year for our handling of a review of a Casa show. A number of readers protested when we placed the review of the season opener on the second page of what was then a two-page Encore.

I like the Garber-Stewart compromise: run a mini-review the day after the opening in Encore and then come back in A&E, which I gather is geared to a larger audience, for the more analytical review.

Something that causes me to grumble frequently in my daily critiques to the staff is how we handle (sometimes I think "mis-handle" would be more appropriate) errors that need to be corrected.

I become particularly peeved when it takes more than one day to correct an error that can be checked out in less than five minutes. That happened twice last week.

I also get testy when we are less than forthcoming in a correction or clarification. This often stems from one of those rules of unknown origin that states that you never repeat a mistake. When you carry this to extremes, you can get quite imprecise.

Take the injustice we did to the Lake Worth and Watauga fire departments last

week.

In a story about a fire that destroyed a Newark grocery store, we stated without any attribution (another journalistic sin), "Calls to the Lake Worth and Watauga fire departments were not returned."

This prompted a protest from Gary Johnson, deputy chief of the Watauga Department of Public Safety. He complained to me that his department had no record of receiving a call for help. He wanted a correction.

He got one — of sort. It read: "In fighting a fire Sunday in Newark, the Newark Volunteer Fire Department requested help from the Saginaw Fire Department. A story in some editions of yesterday's *Star-Telegram* stated that other fire departments were asked to help fight the blaze."

What "other fire departments"? And shouldn't we have said it was erroneously stated? Johnson thought we should have been more precise in exonerating his department. I do too.

This correction, like some others we run, was much too murky in my book.

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