

# Everybody gets into act for a rousing good time

By Donald V. Calamia  
Special writer

## review

A funny thing happened on the way to the forum last weekend at the Southfield Civic Center.

Despite uneven performances and inconsistent vocalizations, the Southfield Civic Theatre's final show of the season was a success.

In many cases, a civic or community theater has little choice when it comes to casting the inexperienced or untrained actors with the more seasoned performers.

The creative staff of "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" purposely chose to present this play with the wide range of performers most groups want to avoid. The staff invited the drama students from the two local high schools to audition for and take part in the show.

Because the annual Summer Music Theater program has been canceled this year by Southfield's Department of Parks and Recreation an additional opportunity for it was decided a theatrical experience was needed by the young thespians. "Forum" was the

character around whom the show is built, good comic timing and the ability to play off the others in the show was required.

IT IS ALSO because of Pseudolus' ever-changing and evolving plans to gain his freedom (and to save his life when his plans backfire) from which the comedy is derived.

It appeared, though, that opening night jitters plagued the implish Stewart's performance. His line delivery did not always have the correct punch it needed to bring forth the desired laughs. Also, when a prop failed to work properly, he was obviously dis-

oriented throughout the next several scenes.

The infamous prop scene was the highlight of the evening for apprentice Jeff Fasan, who portrayed the young lover, Hero. As Stewart was trying to open a money bag which was obviously knotted too tightly, Fasan decided to speed things up by helping unknot the bag.

When it became apparent that the bag was not going to loosen up, Fasan handed it back to Stewart with the comment, "I'll charge it," and exited. The laughs and applause that followed were the loudest and longest of the evening.

Stewart's performance picked up when playing opposite apprentice Don Grant. Appearing as the slave, Hysterium, Grant lived up to his character's name.

AS THE UNWITTING accomplice to Pseudolus' antics, Hysterium finds himself doing everything from creating special potions to serve his cohort's desires to appearing in drag as a dead courtesan in order to save Pseudolus' life.

Grant's performance as the easily excitable slave was of a level beyond his real age. Good comic timing and excellent vocal control more than made up for his untrained singing voice. His scenes in drag were especially well done.

Other strong performances were given by Todd Carless as Hero's father, Senex, who mistakenly thinks the courtesan his son loves is his own new maid (and toy), Gary Mekir as the courtesan's salesman, Marcus Lycus, who pretends he has leprosy in order to save himself from the warrior's wrath; and Grace Ward as the virgin courtesan, Phyllis, around whom all of the misconceptions revolve.

Most satisfying performances of the show, however, were given by Arnold Victor as the old man, Etronius, and Terry Crouson who portrays Miles Gloriosus, the Warrior. Each developed a character distinct from the others and complete unto themselves.

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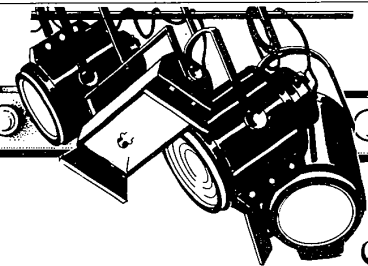
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