

Exquisite production of 'The Little Foxes'

By PATRICIA BEACH SMITH

"The Little Foxes" is no small potatoes. It is a giant tour de force for Meadow Brook Theatre.

Lillian Hellman's phenomenal piece of stage writing is strong enough to be done in black clothes with no set and still come off powerfully. Embellished well by good acting and stagecraft, it is even more exquisite.

There are none of the distractions usually present in Meadow Brook's productions. The lighting by Jean Montgomery is superb, beautifully accompanying Lance Brockman's set. Mary Lynn Bonnell's costumes are as natural, so elegant and appropriate.

Because of the characters, it is difficult for one to overshadow another but clearly Polly Holliday as the calculating Regina spurns is a standout.

MS. HOLLIDAY epitomizes the tone

of the production. Everything she does is so well timed, so harmonious with everything else that nothing is obvious. The production, from acting to stagecraft, is so all-encompassing that one is never aware that this is a stage. This is not real.

Instead, the illusion is perfectly created making the action appear sincere and genuine, happening at the moment.

Joseph Warren is the archetypal Ben Hubbard. His booming voice helps his characterization, but it is more his timing and swagger that gives him power. His weaker young brother Oscar is played to the hilt by John Hallow.

Dear and misunderstood Birdie was played by someone made for the tragic role—Nancy Coleman. Newcomer Tom C. Spackman was wonderfully bumbling as Leo, and his thought-about intended Alexandra also was played excellently by newcomer Laurie Schirmer. Both Ms. Schirmer's

and Spackman's portrayals point up the fact that no one in the play has a "lesser" role. William Le Maistre did not appear to be into his role as much as the others, but he was as convincing as Horace, the besieged husband and father who suffers more physically than anyone else in the play.

ONE OF THE exciting things about Meadow Brook's production is the pace. The tempo of the acts makes one wish there were no intermissions, although Hellman's work needs a little time for digestion from one act to the other.

Nonetheless, it is doubtful that the audience would have minded its missing an intermission to get on with the intrigue.

The intensity of the acting, even in its naturalism, was a stunning factor in a production of which director Charles Nott should be proud. It runs through Jan. 25.



Polly Holliday and John Hallow (standing), with Joseph Warren and Nancy Coleman in "The Little Foxes."

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