

'Pajama Game' fails to stir cast, audience

By CRAIG REYNOLDS
Management let labor down in the Franklin Village Players' "Pajama Game."
Through aimless staging, dull choreography and unsold songs, some talent could still be perceived. However, the directorial staff obviously refused to do the homework and dig for it. Or else the company had spent only 17 days in rehearsal.
Some explanation must be made for the dreadful offkey attempt of the big opening number "Racing with the Clock," a rendition of "Steam Heat" that hit about 40 degrees F., and the union rally for "25 Cents" that would pale next to a junior high pep session.
No excuse can be made for the actors meandering pointlessly along the front 40 feet of the curtain opening, neither lighting nor motivation covered the

slight expanse of the barren West Bloomfield High School stage.
GOOD PEOPLE were motivated to perform in Franklin Village Players' "Pajama Game." Sue Mincks and Bud Match in the lead roles of Babe Williams and Sid Sorokin looked and sounded and paired very well as brass union official and shirt-sleeve superintendent.
Peter Schmidt as Hines, the time-study man, and Sally Kaufman as Gladys, the secretary most often studied, exhibited style and verve.
Ron Wheeler and Bill Lucas as respective presidents of Union and Company, also showed some affinity for their characters.
The chorus for "Pajama Game" was overpopulated with non-singers, non-dancers and non-performers, the entire group always being stretched the width of the stage to aid in picking out non-favorites.

In the chorus work it became painfully obvious that the directorial staff had more interest in insuring large cast parties than any theatrical achievement.
THE REALITY of limitations, whether physical, financial, spiritual or artistic, is as lamentably anathema to community theatre groups as to adolescents.
When will directors of community theatre realize it's unnecessary to cast every dues-paying member? And when will dues-paying members realize their dues do not entitle them to disaffect the paying patrons?
"Pajama Game" is a nice little show, with excellent opportunities in numerous character parts, attractive and simple settings, and several principal roles with show-stopper songs.
It is not necessary to spread a couple dozen people along the plaster line to

sell a proven song like "Once A Year Day"; nor is it necessary to use every inch of available deck space for the tenor lead to prove "A New Town Is A Blue Town."
Robert Bolt in "A Man For All Seasons" employed one actor to represent the entirety of English freemen of the 1600s; certainly a director with some ingenuity could employ any chorus with minimum numbers and maximum talent to represent the demands of the script.
IF THE PRODUCING group deems it necessary to utilize all the available and willing bodies in the coming production, then why should an admission fee be charged for the activity? Why should money be paid to experience bad singing and listless acting?
Either community theatre is an outlet for abilities, talents and needs not

satisfied in a nine-to-five humdrum, or it is an exhibition hall for those with the pretense but not the substance to fulfill the promise of the words printed in the script.
Even Little League requires some talent of the left fielder.
Some people in "Pajama Game" were very good and belonged in a laudable little theatre production, others compromised the production and created only a diversion for the participants.
I question, what people are doing for—not for "in," but "for"—community theatre? In those dozens of groups in Southeastern Michigan, why do they go beyond their means and then lie to themselves that what they've done is good?
Certainly there is energy and talent. "Pajama Game" showed that.
The very existence of so many

groups and so many productions, shows at least the interest and energy.
BUT IS THERE the courage and ability to say "Yes" and "No"? "Yes" we can do a "Pajama Game" with 12 good people and "No," we cannot do "A Little Night Music" or "The Tempest."
Or to say "No" to a few friends who came to try out for a show and can sing, dance or act, but have the very best intentions.
A grief in industry can usually be covered up, a blopper on the stage is remembered forever, by friends, relatives and reviewers.
I liked several people involved in the Franklin Village Players' "Pajama Game," as I have liked the work of hobbyists in many non-professional efforts.
Others have been as offensive as neighbors showing slides of their unwashed families eating hamburgers at Grand Canyon.

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