

# Paris arrives with charm in musical 'Gigi'

SUSAN TAUBER KLEIN

The Avon Players brought turn-of-the-century Paris to the Avon Playhouse on last week when they opened with the Lerner and Loewe musical "Gigi."

Overall, the cast and crew made the evening an enjoyable one with their excellent acting and clever costumes and sets.

The orchestra, conducted by Worth Mallory, carried the pace of the evening. Mallory kept the tempo of all the musical numbers from "Thank Heavens for Little Girls" to "The Nights They Invented Champagne" moving. He also accompanied the singers well.

The only unmusical sounds from the orchestra pit were from the trumpeters when they made their entrances. Moreover, when they came in on wrong notes and slid to the right notes, but when they carried a melody in a lively tune, they sounded good. Mallory was able to keep a nice

balance between all the instruments and the singers.

The lead characters did an excellent job of maintaining a French feeling throughout the musical.

**GIGI**, PLAYED by Mary Whiting, blossomed convincingly from an immature, fun-loving teenager to a mature, lovely woman. Ms. Whiting is a good actress but is weak in her musical numbers. Her voice is very soft, although nice. I had trouble hearing her in the second row of the theater.

The other two female co-stars are Mamita (Helen Morgan) and Alicia Joyce Cooper. Gigi's aunts. Ms. Morgan is delightful, though difficult to hear in her songs, as the poor aunt. She looks her role and her French accent never fails. Ms. Cooper is excellent as the rich, snobbish aunt. Her deep voice is pleasant and she plays the character to the fullest.

The male leads are the strongest musically. Jack Gardner, cast as Honore (the older uncle) projects his voice strongly in all his songs. He does a nice job in portraying the role but lacks facial expressions to go along with his witty lines.

Eric Jones is Gaston, the rich, snobbish young man who falls in love. Jones is the best lead character. His Gaston is real—bored and amused at the right times. He is not afraid to act out with real emotion during the musical.



Gaston (Eric Jones) greets Gigi (Mary Whiting). (Staff photo by Douglas Bauman)

STEWART HARRIS is one of the several young people in the cast who performs different minor roles. But he is the one to notice. In one of his roles as a telephone installer, he displays a strong, beautiful voice and talented acting abilities. He has the best French accent of the cast.

The best scene in "Gigi" is scene three in act two. It takes place in the

law office of Gaston's lawyer "Dufrenoy" (Bob LaPratt). LaPratt was hilarious in his singing and dancing numbers while trying to draw up a contract for Gigi as Gaston's mistress. Mamita, Alicia, duFrene and lawyer Dufrenoy (Bill Maurer) are great in the humorous scene.

The people who really pull the show together are the set and costume people. The stage sets are cleverly designed. The look of opulence was brought out in Alicia's apartment with peach chiffon draped along one side of a silver backdrop. The inside of the famous Paris restaurant "Maxim's" is lit with several chandeliers across the front of the stage. The crystal chandeliers were made from strings of rhinestone necklaces.

The costumes add to the roles of the characters and were carefully planned. Mamita and Alicia each wear skirts with different blouses to make different outfits. Gaston always looks impeccable with his slacks properly dipping at the back hem and his white, gentlemanly gloves tucked into his coat sleeve.

The people responsible for the stage sets and costumes were Dorothy Smith, set designer; Bill MacNeil, set carpenter; Marilyn Flanagan, properties; Joyce Harner, costumes; Doris Zink, head seamstress. Stage manager was Ray deStefano and his assistants are Dorothy Nothelfer and Dick McGowan.

Max Wolf and Clark Quinn are responsible for the good lighting. Clark Quinn and Wolf are the sound staff. Julie Beckers and Rob Jones were the featured dancers. They do a good job with the limited space for dancing.

## Birding planned

A weekend Bird Count will be held at Kensington Metropark near Milford on Saturday and Sunday. Persons should meet each day at the Nature Center between 7 a.m. and 8 a.m.

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