

Brave effort in comedy succeeds only partially

By JOAN METTE

Local theater groups delight in presenting Neil Simon's mature Broadway successes. It's no wonder. They're tested, surefire laugh producers. But it took a certain bravery for the First Theater Guild to take on one of Simon's few failures, "God's Favorite."

When Neil Simon fails, it's only partly so. "God's Favorite" may not be the many size of life we respect from Simon. Who would expect Simon to pen a modern allegory, based on the story of Job? But it's still a funny play and with a lot more to think about than some of his successes.

The First Theater Guild is to be congratulated for making it available in this area. Detailing in humorously gruesome detail the afflictions of one tested by God, "God's Favorite" might make us think about suffering and God's love. But that comes afterwards. This is still a Neil Simon comedy and he still comes up with the funny one-liners.

The prime comic device is an improp-

able Messenger of God, complete with bad sinuses and poor eyesight, wearing raincoat and fishy puppets. Of course, the character is completely unbelievable. But he is funny.

James T. Robertson Jr., as the scholastic Messenger, is delightful. His flamboyancy is outrageous, but that's the kind of behavior you'd expect from this Messenger. As a critic, I kept wanting him not to use the violation of TV personality Paul Lynn. But as a member of the audience, I kept laughing every time he used it.

Perhaps what is wrong with "God's Favorite" is that the Messenger of God is so funny that we keep looking forward to his appearances. The playwright hasn't come up with any other characters to compare with him.

The modern Job and his family are stock characters, set up for the benefit of getting the story told. They do have their comic moments. And codirectors James Cali and Delmyra Moore make the most of them. They chose a style just short of slapstick that seems to go well with that audacious Angel.

THE MOTHER is a prototype of the wealthy suburban matron. She wears jewels and earplugs to bed. Barbara Underwood has her down to a T, a mixture of froth and steel.

The rest of the family includes Budd Glenn as the drunken wastrel son. Glenn is so good as a drunk (most of the play) that we had to see him sober up. Why is it that actors always seem more realistic when they're playing drunks?

Also among the afflicted family are a set of half-brained Bobby Twins, played by John Lorne and Sandra Perkins, and the two live-in servants, Martha J. Moody and Roger Imus. Miss Perkins has some particularly good moments as she fantasizes herself a prospective rape victim. Oh, the squeals of delighted horror!

James T. Robertson Jr., who apparently does everything at First Theater Guild, also deserves kudos for a set design that disintegrates throughout the play. It had the self-destruct qualities that conveyed run without striking the whole set.

Unfortunately, last weekend the play was flawed by the performance of Jack Kerr as the modern Job. Kerr was so insecure in his lines that it was difficult to tell just what his performance might have been. He did seem a bit bland to go with the rest of the family and that overpowering Messenger. Just when his performance seemed to be in, he'd blow his lines again.

That was too bad in spite of its difficulties. I enjoyed the play. I wish I could have seen it more perfected. Theatergoers this weekend when it will be presented Friday and Saturday at the First Presbyterian Church in Birmingham may be more fortunate.

Village readies harvest festival

A century ago, the end of the harvest season was an occasion for celebration. At Greenfield Village in Dearborn, the excitement that marked those early American festivities is recaptured at the fifth annual Autumn Harvest Weekend Saturday and Sunday.

Against a backdrop of autumn's bright colors, all of the village is preparing to turn out for the festive two-day event. Old-time crafts, country music and an antique tractor pull are just part of the fun.

Throughout the weekend, the Village Green will be the site of continuous entertainment. On Saturday and Sunday, costumed square dancers whirl to country tunes and Roy McGinnis and the Sunnysiders perform their special brand of bluegrass music.

Each day, the Activities Field becomes the staging area for an antique tractor pull as more than 50 tractors—none newer than 1940—gather to test their mechanical muscle. Tractors of equal size will vie against one another in a series of weight pulling contests; the tractors pulling the most pounds are the longest distance win. The contest begins each day at noon. However, throughout the weekend, visitors may see the antique tractors on display.

IN ANOTHER CORNER of the village, horseshoeing is demonstrated each day. On Saturday, representatives of the Michigan Horseshoers' Association will show visitors how horseshoes are made, while Sunday's program will include a horseshoeing competition.

Some 50 contestants, divided into two groups depending on their skill, will be given an hour to make two horseshoes. At the end of the time period, their work will be judged according to quality and general appearance.

There'll be things to see and do throughout the village all day each day of Autumn Harvest Weekend. In and around the historic homes and shops, some two dozen craftsmen practice the skills once essential to comfortable rural life. They'll churn butter, press cider, dye wool, dip candles and much more.

In the Village Crafts area, skilled artisans will re-create an old fashioned rug hooking bee. The Early Engine Club will be on hand, too, to demonstrate threshing and other farm chores on chugging antique machines.

Music abounds throughout the weekend. Near the village entrance, the Plymouth Community Band and the Digtown Fingers set the tone, while a barbershop quartet—the Warren G. Harding Memorial Four—entertains from the Swanerie Park gazebo.

ALONG THE residential streets, the Greenfield Village Players present some of the theatrical diversions which entertained Americans' great-grandparents. There's Mark Twain spinning yarns of Mississippi River life, Benjamin Franklin talking of King George and colonial grievances and an old-fashioned Punch and Judy show.

In the background, the shrill toots of two century-old steam locomotives can be heard as they carry visitors along the village perimeter. The steamboat "Swanee," Model T and horse-drawn carriages and wagons offer still more nostalgic trips into the past.

Autumn Harvest Weekend is presented at no additional charge beyond the regular Greenfield Village admission of \$3 for adults and \$1.25 for children 6 through 12. Children under six are admitted free.

Saturday has been designated Senior Citizen Day. Seniors may attend Autumn Harvest Weekend in the village or visit adjacent Henry Ford Museum for the reduced admission fee of \$1.50.

Pontiac area residents may wish to take advantage of a special express charter bus service from Pontiac Mall to Greenfield Village for Autumn Harvest Weekend on Saturday. The bus will depart from the mall at 10 a.m. return-

ing that afternoon by approximately 4 p.m. Additional information and tickets are available at Grinnell's in Pontiac Mall.

Cash in aluminum at Reynolds Mobile Recycling Units and Centers



We pay 15¢ a lb. cash for aluminum cans and other, clean, household aluminum.

which includes aluminum foil, pie pans, frozen food and dinner trays, dip, pudding and meat containers. Certain other clean, all-aluminum items can be redeemed. Call your Center for details.

Bring yours to:

DETROIT REYNOLDS ALUMINUM MOBILE RECYCLING UNIT AT EASTLAND SHOPPING CENTER 18000 Verne Every Tuesday 12:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	TAYLOR REYNOLDS ALUMINUM MOBILE RECYCLING UNIT AT SOUTHLAND SHOPPING CENTER 2323 E. Lenox Rd. Every Saturday 12:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
SOUTHFIELD REYNOLDS ALUMINUM MOBILE RECYCLING UNIT AT NORTHLAND SHOPPING CENTER 18700 Mack Rd. and Green Rd. Every Sunday 12:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	WESTLAND REYNOLDS ALUMINUM MOBILE RECYCLING UNIT AT WESTLAND SHOPPING CENTER 20000 West Warren Every Saturday 12:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.



SAVE THIS AD

We need your business.

Last year local businessmen in the tri-county area made a big investment: a sizeable contribution to the United Foundation Torch Drive. And their investment is bringing sizeable returns as the citizens of 113 communities in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties benefit from health and medical research programs, youth and recreational services, family counseling, aid to the handicapped and many other Torch Drive-supported services.

To these businessmen, we say, "Thanks... we appreciate your business."

And, we say, "Please... won't you help again?"

The Torch Drive needs your business to make our community a healthy place for everyone... and a better place for you to do business.

In a few days, a special Torch Drive volunteer will be calling on you. Remember, that single volunteer represents nearly 140 different Torch Drive agencies in our community.

Please give a helping hand. Make a big investment through a generous pledge to this year's Torch Drive. We need your business.

People who need... need people who care.



This message is run in the interest of your community by

Ford Division Lincoln-Mercury Division

State of Michigan Charitable Solicitation License No. MICS 2123

*Torch Drive contributions are not used to pay for this ad. The cost is paid for by the sponsoring company. In addition to its generous Torch Drive gift.

PICTURE FRAMING

12 MILE

DMI ROYAL OAK

222 N. WOODWARD

11 MILE

artist supplies
drafting supplies
picture framing

d.m.I. Industries Inc.

222 n. woodward
royal oak, mich. 48067
(313) 546-2880

when shopping in dearborn
visit DMI DEARBORN
at 23522 michigan ave.
between telegraph & lake street

banknote sold &
master charge accepted

BALDWIN
PIANO-ORGAN
INTERLOCHEEN
SALE

Smiley Brothers
Detroit, 3510 Woodward
875-7194
Birmingham, 1010 N. Hunter Blvd.
647-1177
Dearborn, 5664 Telegraph
278-1924
Open Sunday, 1-5 Parking