

Getting Around

By ETHEL SIMMONS



New season offers fresh productions

Four offbeat shows, that should fill a gap in legitimate theater offerings locally, will be produced by the Birmingham Theatre for its second subscription season.

The shows are "Hold Me!" sketches, skits and vignettes by Jules Feiffer, March 5-10; "Veronica's Room," a thriller by Ira Levin, April 9-14; "Hooters," a comedy by Ted Tally, May 7-12, and "Ladyhouse Blues," a poignant drama by Kevin O'Morrison.

Artistic Director Michael Steneall, who joined the theater staff this fall, has put together the second season.

"Two shows, 'Hooters' and 'Ladyhouse Blues,' have been performed in workshops," he said. "Hold Me!" was performed off-Broadway in New York and Los Angeles and 'Veronica's Room' has been performed on Broadway.

"HOOTERS" WAS done at the Manhattan Theatre in their workshop; "Ladyhouse Blues" was performed in Chicago.

"I'm about to sign Robert Falls, who directed 'Ladyhouse Blues.' He also will direct 'Hooters' here. Falls is about 26 years old and one of the top directors in Chicago. He won five major directing awards."

Each show will star a TV, motion picture or Broadway personality. The stars will be announced in January, after the new television season is firm up, according to Steneall.

In late January, Steneall will audition metropolitan Detroit talent for supporting roles in each show. He will do the rest of the casting in Chicago and Toronto.

"The emphasis will be on quality," he said. "I want very, very talented people."

ACTORS WHO want to audition should watch the newspaper for announcement of tryouts at the Birmingham Theatre. Steneall said each actor will be expected to audition for a particular part, reading from the play and then doing improvisation.

The second subscription season is a far cry from the Birmingham Theatre's first, on-going season, which has been a hodge-podge of presentations. Major talents have been offered in shows and concerts, with expensive ticket prices.

For the second season, the theater's own productions will be offered at considerably lower ticket prices. Season ticket holders can see four shows for the price of three.

Four shows at an individual top price of \$12 will cost \$36 for all four on a season's subscription. A season of matinees go for as low as \$22, or \$5.48 a show, for all four.

A MASS MAILING of 100,000 brochures announcing the second season has gone into the mail this week, Steneall said.

Stingy Scrooge makes the show

By GAY ZIEGER

Review

The evening clearly belonged to Ebenezer Scrooge in the First Theater Guild's production of "The Stingiest Man in Town." That familiar old miser was played conventionally, yet with a touch of originality, by Boris Sellers.

He was perfectly in character at all times: His voice cracked when it should have, his back bent according to the burden of the moment, his steps, his facial expressions, his sobs were all in keeping with the mood. This was a truly remarkable bit of acting.

There were other strong performances, though with a cast nearly larger than the audience, it would be difficult to give due credit. Certain ones come to mind most readily, though.

Harriet Fox as the charwoman was properly lusty and busy, much in keeping with the stereotypical view of the lower class of the early 1840s.

HER GAP-TOOTHED smile, brash tones and sure movements made her a strong character.

Her counterpart, Bill Robertson, conveyed the rascally spirit well. George Moore III as Marley's ghost was rather awesome. Also noteworthy were performances by W. Budd Glenn, Bob Davis, Paul Smith, Peggy Glenn, John Lorne and Marilyn Bura.

The play was a little difficult to warm up to at first. The chorus' insistence on "Holly Ho, Holly Ho Ho" and a bad case of overwhelming good cheer and saccharin sentimentality made Scrooge seem to be an exceedingly perceptive man of reason.

The initial hope was that he would prevail. Soon, however, even the most ripsnorting among the audience were caught up in the spirited entertainment.

It would be hard to find a more elaborate production in this area in terms of costuming, make-up, sets and special effects. Those responsible for the period attire, Martha Moody and period attire, Martha Moody and period attire, James T. Robertson, Jr., paid strict

attention to detail and the effect was colorful and mood-evoking.

The elite, the ordinary and the rag pickers were all represented, not to mention assorted ghosts, spirits and lavishly clad dancers.

The choreographed scenes by Gayle Ernst and Leah Betts were sometimes just pretty but mostly were amusing and eerie. At least one dance and certainly a ghost scene or two seemed almost too macabre even for today's sophisticated youngsters. None seemed especially frightened, but they weren't doting, either.

Some of the spine-chilling qualities owed to superb make-up. The crew, Missy Chapdelaine, Adrienne Krebs, Ann Manby, James T. Robertson, Jr., Donna Rhinehart and Martha Walters are to be lauded.

The most exciting aspect of the evening was the use of special effects. Most smaller-scale productions keep such devices to a minimum but such people as Irv Poston, Kirk Lietz, Lynne and Paul Arbogast, and Dick and Bill Herrmann were most ambitious.

In one scene, a brightly lighted Christmas tree emerged before our very eyes. The appearances of the sepulchres were complete with strobe lights, small explosions and the lighting up of what in daylight appeared to be an ordinary wall hanging.

All this, along with lovely off stage moaning-singing, made one happy that it was just a play.

There are 22 musical numbers in all. This version is inferior to Dickens' original. However, it is fun and the actors and staff certainly have researched and rehearsed.

There will be additional performances this weekend at the First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, 1669 W. Maple. For ticket information call 642-7564.

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at 545-2576, for an audition date. Showcases talent performs without pay.
Young comic Michael Binder, who was raised in Birmingham and performed at the Midtown, is expected to return for some shows. He now appears at L.A.'s Comedy Store.

TIMBERLINE RECORDS, a new recording studio slated for Birmingham, has released its first single rationally.

Paul Schubert of Howell, president, said the record features his brother, Mark Schubert, also of Howell, and Larry Lambert of Grand Blanc, who harmonize with two backup musicians on drums and bass.

"The Way the Sun Sets" is the A side, with "Seagull" on the flip side. Music and lyrics for both songs are by the two vocalists.

"My brother has the talent and has not been able to utilize his potential," Paul Schubert explained. Another single with Mark will be released in January and Mark's first album in February.

BROTHER MARK'S music is classical folk rock, but Paul said he is in the market for other kinds of musical groups. "I want people who write their own music, or sing music written by people they know. I want creative people," he stressed.

Paul's fiancée, Beth Merry, appears with the group Jasmine around Detroit, and Paul has written music and lyrics for songs she will record for the Timberline label.

Timberline's A. and R. man is Dr. Gerald Woughter, professor of music at Oakland Community College, Orchard Ridge. Woughter will listen to tapes from potential recording artists.

Paul Schubert will arrange for auditions. "We're looking for people who have the talent but never get the chance, because larger record companies say no."

INTERESTED MUSICIANS may call Schubert at 644-3277.

Schubert plans to install all European equipment in the new studio, which will be a \$24 million dollar operation. His own music publishing company will be in the same complex.

Paul Schubert was born in Bloomfield Hills and his father has been a podiatrist in Birmingham for 25 years.

Schubert said he started to put his recording company together last January. "It's still in the planning stage," he said. Recordings are being made out of Sound Patterns in Farmington, which he called "the finest studio in the state," until the Birmingham studio is ready this summer. The location has not been announced.

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Bob Davis plays Mr. Cratchett in "The Stingiest Man in Town."