

'Cheaper by the Dozen' provides fun for families

By MATT GERSON

review

THE STORY revolves around Dad — the dominant and resolute figure leading his pack of children with his "Fawcettian" style conditioning whistle.

Dad sets efficiency-expert concepts and routines to be followed, to the letter, in the kid's daily duties at home, in the classroom, and even in their own, more personal lives outside of the "school."

As we begin the tale, the story skips up to after Dad passed from the scene — some 20 years after. Two of the kids, now adults, reminisce about certain unforgettable passages during their growing-up.

This "prologue" occurs at the start of each of the three acts of the play.

If this were a modern play — if such things were tried in a family in the 1950s for example — what you might get would be a number of future James Deans. Their female counterparts perhaps would be in the forefront of the beatnik generation of bohemians who hang out for kicks and thrills, with cars, booze, or whatever.

BUT IT'S the calm, tranquil, "man's home is his castle" era of pre-Cold War America. The car, the vehicle of escape into fantasy and freedom, is only a raucous noise heard offstage, followed by a succession of unfortunate, young men, who are met with a steel stare by Daddy, and the sad-eyed insistence by Anne, the oldest and most popular, that she is too busy to go for a ride.

So the situation and set we see is unchanging — the flowered wallpaper in bright colors, the plush burgundy silk draperies, sailing etching and Dad's di-

ploma from his management school on the walls. Incidentally, it's a nicely constructed one, given the rather small stage at the church.

However, the direction suffers from, no doubt, not enough time to work with the actors on voice projection, and delivery of lines as a reaction to other lines, just as somewhat mechanically and tentatively.

Hopefully, more work by Director Adrienne Krebs to solidify and make the lines sound more forceful, and more confidently delivered, would help the production greatly.

As the fearless, yet underpoken leader, J. Marshall Robbins needs just one more thing to be convincing — a louder, more full-bodied use of that chest and lungs, to bounce his endless notions farther into the audience.

demure, quiet, obeying, supportive, tactful — and just about always, when given a chance, ready to give her kids more freedom.

Dominated as she is by Robbins, she looks the part of quiet, gentle reasonableness.

After Dad leaves the scene, in Act III, we can suspect things will get more normal and red-blooded in the household. Not only rebellious Anne, but the others will, like water, seek their own level of what they feel is right for them, their own values.

One funny feature of this play is its very old-fashioned, Victorian credos, couched under nouveau terms like "motion study" and "efficiency."

So on. But, he loves work charts, food procuring committees while he's gone for "survival" and moral rectitude at all times — even when alone, for once, with his wife.

IT DEVELOPS at the end, that Mr. Gilbreth's insistances that "time is everything — you can't ever waste it," hide his knowledge of the growing trouble with his heart. Maybe all these strictures have just bottled up all his own (secret) desires, which have just eaten away his happiness?

As he leaves for a management conference, to organize the whole country, it is to be assumed, he finally accepts daughter Anne's newest friend, let's her go, and tells all, "You save time for when your heart lies, be it work, art, or even mumblety-peg — if that's where your heart is."

So he's changed it seems.

Show runs on energy

By RYAN A. HUSAYNU

Energy. It continuously explodes, subsides and then explodes again in the University of Detroit Theatre Company production of David Mamet's critically acclaimed drama, "American Buffalo."

The production, which has run for two weekends, will close this weekend with performances Friday and Saturday evenings.

Unanimously hailed as the most exciting drama since Albee's "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" "American Buffalo" literally explodes with life, emotion and power in a trial of three men.

Directed by Susann Brinkley and staged at the tiny Studio 100 on the university's campus, the play's devices are very simple. The production is a success by its strong acting.

THE PLAY IS set in a cluttered junkshop where its owner Don, his friend Teach and Don's young friend Bobby make plans to steal a valuable coin collection. Their prospective victim, a chance customer in the junkshop, had discovered a rare Buffalo-head nickel in the shop, and he purchased the nickel for \$90.

Appalled by the man's arrogant behavior, Don decides to get his nickel back — plus more.

As the play unfolds, the trio's inexperience as thieves becomes all too obvious. Making matters worse, Don insists on bringing in another friend, Fletcher.

While waiting for Fletcher to arrive, the three men persecute each other in an amazing lack of logic, especially common sense. Speaking in frank, unabashed street talk, emotions run fervent as the play steadily builds to a shooting and violent climax.

All three characters are striving to attain something intangible. Don, portrayed by Dr. Arthur J. Beer of the theater department, is trying to regain the respect that he lost when he sold the coin. He feels that the customer would have paid three times as much for the coin and that he was wronged.

DON WANTS to repay the man and more; he wants the man's collection and most importantly his coin.

David Regal, chairman of the Theatre Company, portrays Don's friend, the volatile streetfighter, Teach. As the play begins Teach is down on his luck and is looking for a break — some sort of success. He sees the burglary as a means to success and a sense of accomplishment. Teach tries to explain the way life is to Don and constantly puts down Bobby and Fletcher.

Bobby is Don's somewhat retarded friend. He is tormented by Teach and becomes a victim of the situation. Marcus Neville portrays this victim, who tries the hardest to do anything positive; he tries to reciprocate Don's kindness and friendship. He only wants to be a better friend.

Together with the characters Mamet has made and with the actors performing these roles, "American Buffalo" is a very intense drama. Beer, Regal and Neville all milk the audience with energy and revivals of energy that seem to come from nowhere. It is the energy of people.

Travel film eyes Colorado

The Community House in Birmingham continues its Travel Film Series with photographer Stan Midgley narrating his color film "Colorado Check-league" at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

Tickets are available in advance at the Community House, Bates and Townsend.

Midgley first takes viewers via helicopter over the tranquil snow-covered mountain peaks, landing at Vail, Colo., where the Alpine Skiing Championships are in progress.

Viewers will tour this town and visit with people participating in the winter wonderland at the resort.

Dreickridge, with four ski areas, is also visited as well as the Aspen and Steamboat Springs.

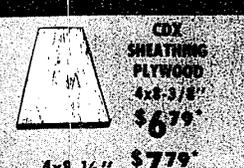
Midgley takes armchair travelers on a spring-time bike ride of Denver, Boulder, Colorado Springs, and Prospect Lake, including visits to the University of Denver, The Civic Center, Ladinier Square and The Garden of the Gods.

NEXT, MIDGLEY takes his camera to Cheyenne and The Sevenfalls where this sight of water and rugged rock set the stage for The Rocky Mountain Hang Gliding Championships at Telluride.

These skilled hang gliders float through the canyon with their multi-colored kites; all set to music.

Preceding the travel film, The Community House will serve dinner, reservation only, from 6 p.m. both evenings.

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