

# 'Little Foxes' performed in a tentative manner

By KATHRYN PARSONS

## review

Lillian Hellman's "The Little Foxes" opened cautiously at Will-O-Way Theatre last weekend.

While this production of "The Little Foxes" reeks with the languor of the South, it regrettably lacks momentum. The ambiguity of character, the playful wit of the dialogue, are lost in a fairly leaden interpretation.

With the exception of a few, the cast is obviously still warming to its roles and perhaps in the weeks to come will learn to give the lines the easy breath that they deserve.

Performances by the Will-O-Way Repertory Theatre continue at 8:30 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays through June at the playhouse in Bloomfield Township.

The play takes place in the post-bellum South at the turn of the century. Nuances of courtesy are beginning to erode under the raw pressure for survival.

Small-town tradesmen, "Hubbards everywhere," are adapting with facility to the industrial age. The replacement of aristocratic patronage by upstart greed, the eclipse of the old by the new is played out in vicious domestic battles of the Hubbard family who counter for control of one another's property.

"THE LITTLE FOXES" unfortunately suffered a shock with the loss of its leading lady Betty Hancock as Regina Hubbard earlier in the week. Elaine Koerner slid into the role the last minute with a commanding style. She delivers her lines, shrewd and harsh by turns, with dignity.

Her brother, Oscar Hubbard, is

Having married Birdie, the "high-toned" daughter of the cotton aristocrat.

racy, Oscar Hubbard has done everything in his power since to abuse and offend his delicate wife.

Celia Merrill Turner plays Birdie, whose passion for music, and for the gentle beauty of a lost South, poignantly centers itself on the memories of her childhood house, the plantation Lionnet, which the Hubbards now own.

She recalls the vignettes of her past wistfully, her fluttered manner that of a woman who, for lack of "a single whole day" of happiness in 22 years of marriage, has turned for solace to drink.

SUCH INJURED romanticism seem to

lend themselves to Southern dramas. They are familiar and unfaithfully moving figures.

Marshall Robbins plays William Marshall, the gentleman from Chicago who will help bring the mills South, with a cool grace. As a Northerner and an outsider, his polite interest allows each member to reveal his or her sly temperament.

Naturally, it is only Birdie whose wishes are virtuous. Celia Turner shows us a woman in a world of her own, remote from the greedy dreams of those in the lair about her.

These dreams hinge upon the arrival of their brother-in-law, Regina's hus-

band Horace Giddens (George Martin), who has been convalescing in John Hopkins. Evidently his weakened heart has strengthened his moral vision. With the blinking and blurred gestures of a tired man, George Martin is convincing, but slow, as he makes his last stand for decency several decades too late.

If we have hopes for the younger generation in the form of Oscar's son Leo, we are disappointed. From the start, Steve Lavende plays the shy adolescent with a curling lip and flashing eye.

ON THE OTHER hand, Tine Turner as Regina's daughter Alexandra, has

all the compassion and clarity we see in no one else. With a mournful and proud carriage, Tine portrays an Alexandra who can resist the inextinguishable evil of the Hubbard family politics.

Frank Scott plays the part of faithful family servant Cal with a spirit and humor unusual to this performance of "The Little Foxes." As Addie, his counterpart, Melissa Brice gives us a comforting performance, delivering her kitchen wisdom with a mild deference to those about her.

The set, designed and built by Brett Reynolds, gives appropriate attention to the somber details of the late Victorian period.

## second runs

### Tom Panzenhagen

Many of the film societies have adjourned for the summer, which means that our main source of cinema for a while will be television. The Redford Theatre, Bloomfield Township Public Library and some shows at Detroit's Institute of Art and Public Library will dot this column in future weeks, but for today, we're switching on the tube.

"Destry Rides Again," 1 p.m. today on Channel 50. Made in 1939, running time 94 minutes.

Notable for a few things: A very young Jimmy Stewart, Marlene Dietrich singing "See what the boys in the back room will have" and some Western satire that finds pacifist Stewart taming a wild, wild town. Directed by George Marshall.

"Murder, He Says," 1 p.m. Friday on Channel 50. Made in 1945, running time 91 minutes.

Another George Marshall film, this one finding Fred MacMurray — minus his three sons — as a poor man's version of the insurance agent he played in "Double Indemnity" the year before, wrapped up with murderous hillbilly family led by Marjorie "Tugboat Annie" Main. Romance, slapstick and black humor easily interwoven.

"Monkey Business," 12:30 a.m. Friday night on Channel 50. Made in 1931, running time 77 minutes.

The third Marx Brothers film, featuring Thelma Todd and Tom Kennedy. Here we have the brothers as seafarers aboard a ship to America. Upon arrival, in order to pass through customs, each one poses as heartthrob Maurice Chevalier singing "If a nightingale could sing like you." Harpo tops them all by miming the real Chevalier and pulling a phonograph that is playing the record out from under his coat. Written by the incomparable S.J. Perelman.

"Tarzan's Secret Treasure," 11:30 a.m. Saturday on Channel 50. Made in 1941, running time 81 minutes.

Noteworthy because WKBD is finally getting back to the Johnny Weissmuller-Maureen O'Sullivan Tarzan films. Johnny's worth a dozen Lex Barkers, Denny Millers, Ron Ellys and Mike Henrys put together, and Maureen (currently on Broadway in the Toni award-winning "Mornings at Seven") remains unsurpassed.

"Titanic," 1 p.m. Saturday on Channel 50. Made in 1953, running time 98 minutes.

Who'd have thought that Clifton Webb, Barbara Stanwyck, Robert Wagner, Brian Aherne and Thelma Ritter would even begin to go down with the ship. An early "Airport" for all its Hollywoodisms, not as good as the 1958 British version, "A Night to Remember."

"The Curse of the Cat People," midnight Saturday on Channel 50. Made in 1944, running time 70 minutes.

Val Lewton was in his heyday as a director of B horror films. He'd already made the acclaimed "Cat People" in '42, again with import Simone Simon who appears in this sequel. Much better than you might think because "Curse" is more psychological chiller than monster film. Lewton was the best of his genre.

"Romeo and Juliet," 9 p.m. Sunday on Channel 7. Made in 1966, running time 138 minutes.

Oz, so you know how it's going to end, but Franco Zeffirelli's version of the Shakespeare tale is better than most and beautifully filmed. Olivia Hussey and Leonard Whiting are fine as the star-crossed lovers; the music of Fellini protégé Nino Rota is perfect.

"Anna Karenina," 1:35 a.m. Monday night on Channel 7. Made in 1935, running time 95 minutes.

Not many Garbo films cross the screen these days, so you'd better tune in on "Anna." Fredric March and Basil Rathbone play opposite in Tolstoy's story of tragic love. Lots of elegant close-ups, that sort of thing. Enjoy yourself.

The less he spoke,  
the more he heard.  
Why can't we all  
be like that bird?

- E. H. Richards

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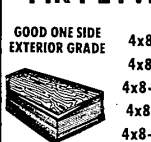


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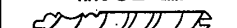
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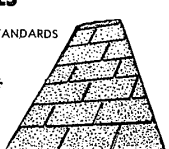
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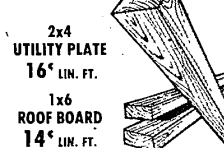


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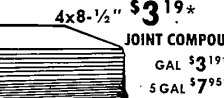


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