

Sprightly performances beef up weak production

By DONALD V. CALAMIA

The first Theatre Guild of Birmingham's current production of "Two by Two" succeeds in entertaining its audience primarily through the efforts of several highly energetic and talented performers.

The musical, written by Richard Rodgers, concludes its run Friday and Saturday at Knox Auditorium, First Presbyterian Church, 1659 W. Maple. "Two by Two" follows the adventures of Noah who, after a visit from God on his 600th birthday, tries to convince his unbelieving family that they must build an ark to save themselves from a terrible flood.

The family, of course, is skeptical. Finally, with God's help, the family is convinced of the seriousness of the matter, and work on the ark is begun.

A HITCH that develops, though, is that two of every kind of creature has to accompany Noah on the ark, and Noah's youngest son is not married. In order to go with his family, the youngest son must be married.

Throughout the ordeal, Noah's beliefs are tested, but the family and cargo finally board the ark for a year-long voyage. Eventually, the land is dry, and both humans and animals start new lives on a freshly cleansed world.

Leading off the cast as Noah is George Moore III. Moore avoids the stereotypical old man and brings to life an exciting, playful, yet fearful Noah who accepts the challenge given him

review

with great enthusiasm.

Though Moore tends to "talk-sing" most of his musical numbers, he does them totally in character which makes his development of Noah quite acceptable.

His eyes twinkling, Moore easily handles his comic lines with a flair nearly unmatched in community theater. It is obvious Moore knows his theatrical skills and limitations and uses them to their fullest.

CARRYING THE show with Moore is actress Harriet Fox, who plays Noah's wife, Esther. Unlike most amateur performers, Mrs. Fox has mastered the use of her face in conveying the meaning of her dialogue.

Needless gestures are replaced by a raise of her eyebrows or a squint of her eyes which lets the audience in on Esther's innermost thoughts and feelings.

Though Mrs. Fox had trouble with the lines of her song, "An Old Man," she rose above the average performer, remaining totally in character and making it appear as if nothing was wrong.

The chemistry and comic timing between Moore and Mrs. Fox was a delight to watch. It's obvious they enjoy working together, which helps make this show enjoyable.

Another refreshing performance is given by Del Moore who plays the god-

dess of the golden ram, Goldie. Decked out in a skin-tight outfit and a blond corn-curl hair-do, Mrs. Moore's character is reminiscent of Madeline Kahn who portrayed Goldie in the show on Broadway.

HER DUMB-BLONDE characterization went far enough to remain funny and witty without getting on the nerves of her audience. Like Mrs. Fox, Mrs. Moore possesses one of the finest singing voices in the show.

Other satisfying performances are given by Jack Miller as Japheth, Noah's youngest son, who doubts God's

intentions with the world, and is frustrated by the love of his world and the love for his family. Judy Trippett who plays Leah, the eldest son's wife, who runs the roost and the pocketbook of her stingy husband's affairs; and Priscilla Summers as the innocent and lovely Rachel, wife of Noah's second son.

Enthusiastic performances also are given by Bob Davis as Shem, the eldest son, and Jim Brooks as the middle son, Ham.

In undertaking his first directing assignment, Cliff Lundren shows that with more experience he could become

a good community theater director. This production, though, is flawed. It is only through the hardworking efforts of his cast that the show succeeds.

All the ingredients for an excellent production are here: a good cast (whose acting abilities outline their singing abilities), excellent musical accompaniment, and a colorfully functional set.

WHAT IS MISSING is tight directing in the group scenes. Actors who are speaking are blocked from view by other actors, and too many people are

jammed into too small a space on stage.

Also, supporting characters are not fully developed, and they look bewildered by what's going on around them.

With additional work on particular details within certain scenes, Lundren could improve this show tremendously.

Group choreography is also shaky, though Goldie's dance number "The Golden Ram" is delightfully sinful.

Information regarding "Two by Two" can be obtained by calling 528-3685.

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