

Real-life cast adds flair to Franklin's 'Gazebo'

Performances of the Franklin Village Players production of "The Gazebo," mystery-comedy by Alec Coppel, continue at 8:30 p.m. June 17-19 in Franklin School on Franklin Road between 13 and 14 Mile roads. Tickets are \$5 for adults, \$5 for senior citizens and full-time students. The price includes dessert and beverage served at intermission. For ticket information, call 626-5738.

By Barbara Michaels
special writer

With three real-life attorneys and two authentic policemen in the cast, it seems unlikely anyone will get away with murder in "The Gazebo," the mystery currently offered by the Franklin Village Players. Someone nerdy does, though.

When television mystery writer Elliott Nash (Bill Barish) decides to permanently rid himself of a peaky black-mailer, he finds that his well-laid plans go very much awry. His wife, his neighbor, his real estate agent and the black-mailer's cronies all contribute to his growing problems.

Barish is at his best when acting distraught, and his character is distraught a great deal. Running his fingers through his hair, clutching his head in his hands, doing double-takes at surprising revelations, Barish ably succeeds in building sympathy for Elliott.

It is the times when Elliott is at ease that Barish tends to be a bit stilted, though. At Saturday night's performance Barish had recurring line problems

review

but managed to recover gracefully each time.

KAREN KATZ is poised and credible as Nell Nash, a successful actress and Elliott's wife. It is to protect his wife's reputation that Elliott acts against the blackmailer, only to discover the case against her is so patently that Nell laughs the whole thing off.

Nell's decision to erect a gazebo in their back yard proves both a boon and a bane for Elliott. The foundation for the gazebo seems an ideal spot to dispose of a body, but Elliott's not the only one to figure that out. When Elliott needs advice on crime, he frequently picks the brain of district attorney Harlow Edison, his neighbor and close friend. Real-life attorney Clyde Pritchard handles the role with a smooth and relaxed delivery, and he seems right at home questioning the Nashes and trying to reconstruct the crime.

Betty-lee Seydler-Sweet is all bustling efficiency as the real estate agent who pokes around the Nash home at all the wrong times as she tries to convince them to sell their house.

Soeren Gozmannian is a sure-fire scene-stealer as Louis, a hoodlum who terrorized Elliott. Replete with checkered trousers, jagged facial scar and uncouth diction, Gozmannian's Louis is a thug incarnate.

LOUIS' COHORT is the Dook, a

dapper Englishman with derby hat and Oxford accent. John Besley Lake plays the suave villain to perfection.

In smaller roles, Rose Galley is amusing as Elliott's troublesome maid, and Rob Sikes is satisfactory as the too-helpful contractor working on the gazebo. John Green is only sometimes convincing as the police inspector, and Bill Anderson seems ill at ease as the police surgeon.

Franklin policemen Ben David and Ed Girardo add authenticity to the proceedings, and it's refreshing to find on-stage policemen wearing uniforms that fit.

Director Diane Lake needs to tighten the pacing, especially during the scene changes when too many stagehands seem to be wandering around aimlessly.

The set, designed by Sandy Barth and constructed by E. Paul Miller, is a very handsome rendering of the Nashes' living room. Costumes look good throughout.

"The Gazebo" is presented in a cabaret setting. The audience sits at small tables cheerily set with pink and white cloths and fresh daisies. At intermission, ice cream is served with a variety of sundae toppings and coffee, tea or lemonade. Service is efficient and very cordial.

Proceeds from the production will aid the Franklin community to erect its own gazebo in the village park.



DICK KELLY/staff photographer

'Hooray for Hollywood'

David Glick (left), Katherine Grimshaw, Larry Parks and Ann Hill clown around at rehearsal for "Hooray for Hollywood," a Hollywood tribute that will be part of The Community House fundraiser on Friday night in Birmingham. Henry K. Martin of Bloomfield Hills wrote and directed

the one-hour musical revue especially for this event. The evening includes cocktails at 7 and dinner at 8:30, followed by the show and then dancing to the big-band sound. For more information call The Community House at 644-5832.

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