

Farmington, 1st Theatre Guild offer shows

'Tribute'

Performances of the Farmington Players production of "Tribute" by Bernard Slade continue through Saturday, Nov. 12. For ticket information, call ticket chairmen Bill and Kathleen Monticello at the box office, 533-8822.

By Barbara Michaels
special writer

As skillfully presented by The Farmington Players, Bernard Slade's "Tribute" is an emotionally rich drama, mixing humor and pathos in pleasing proportions.

To his many friends, New York public relations man Scottie Templeton (Ralph Rossi) is America's answer to Zorba the Greek. His wit, charm and generosity are boundless, and his perpetual blinks and high spirits enrich the lives of most who know him.

To his estranged teen-age son, Jud (Arthur Lyons), Scottie is a selfish, irresponsible clown who has never grown up. Even after learning his father has leukemia, Jud remains unfeeling of the many childhood hurts his father caused.

Scottie wants to leave Jud a legacy of laughter and zest for life, but Jud is an unwilling pupil, strait-laced, and self-righteous. As Scottie's friends gather to pay tribute to him, Jud tries to find something of value in his father. Each has been a disappointment to the other, and father and son must struggle to accept in the other what he cannot change.

ROSSIE'S SCOTTIE is wonderfully warm and likeable, less glib than he is usually portrayed and thus more believable when he allows his emotional pain to surface. Caught between his impending death and his son's recriminations, Scottie can see little in himself worth saving. Rossi has a solid stage

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presence and offers a polished, faultless delivery.

As Jud, Lyons is a mass of relentless anger. Embittered by his parents' divorce and his father's failings, Jud sees the world only in absolutes. His unbending high standards leave him lonely and alienated. Lyons effectively conveys Jud's impotent rage when, during a climactic confrontation, Jud backs into a childhood statue.

All of the supporting cast perform well. Sharon Holdrich is a sprightly Sally Hansen, the girl Scottie hopes will humanize his son. Often serving as a buffer between father and son, Sally injects good sense and objectivity.

Carol Green plays Maggie, Scottie's ex-wife, with great gentleness and sensitivity. Though well aware of Scottie's shortcomings, Maggie still appreciates Scottie's strengths and accepts him for what he is.

As Leo Daniels, Scottie's boss and loyal friend, L. David McCabe is totally credible, especially when he simulates stage fright and stumbles through his testimonial speech.

JOYCE MOORE is assertive and professional as Scottie's worried physician who can't understand his reluctance to begin his cancer treatment.

Maggie Elshaus radiates charm and savvy as Hilary, a retired prostitute and longtime friend of Scottie's.

Under director Tony Nashall, the Farmington production is generally well-paced, well-acted and richly poignant. Scene endings tend to be too muted, falling flat. However, this low-key approach works exceedingly well in the final scene and saves it from getting too sticky.

Performances of the musical "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown," presented by the First Theatre Guild, continue at 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday and at 2:30 p.m. Sunday at First Baptist Church, 1069 W. Maple at Chestfield, Birmingham. Tickets at \$5 for adults and \$3 for students are available at the door.

By J. Timothy Penn
special writer

Transforming the magic of Clark Gessner's "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown" onto the stage is not an easy task.

Unfortunately, the First Theatre Guild of Birmingham's current effort comes off a lot like the head character's quest in life. As we all know, Charlie M. Schultz is Charlie Brown and tries again but never quite makes it.

Although it has its bright moments and one outstanding performance, this production never captures Schulz's philosophy, which Clark Gessner manages to catch in his music and lyrics.

The shining star in this production is Melanie Hansen as Peppermint Patty. She portrays the cartoon character with the hand-waving, foot-shuffling and animated intensity that the play's author intended.

HANSEN, WHO is on stage less than any of the other players, proves once again the old adage about there being no small parts only small actors. Just her Peppermint presence picks up the performances of the other cast.

Brightest spot of the overall performance is the baseball scene, which is superbly choreographed and the only time when the real animation of these characters comes alive. Given the opportunity to have it up a little, all the players give their all in this scene.

Director and Musical Director Martha Welton also gets good performances from the cast's younger members — Ted Halbert as Schroeder and Brian J. Cloutier as Linus. They better fit the mold of the characters they were asked to portray than do David "Skip" Pobst as Charlie Brown and Mary Lyle as Lucy.

After a slow start in the first act, Lyle comes on much stronger in the second stanza with her rendition of "Little Known Facts," probably the best vocal number of the show. Unfortunately, the rest of the musical numbers falter.

This is obvious from the beginning when the production's title song can't be heard above the orchestra.

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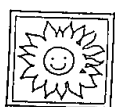
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review

The orchestra, does a fine job in all respects especially the background music. However, it falls a few times to take into consideration the co-stage voices of the players.

This time around, the real kudos go to the kids at FTG. They fit their roles and one even steals the show in "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown."

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