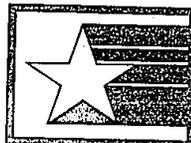


Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



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Alvin again Director stars in show

See review of "I Love My Wife" on next page

By Ethel Simmons
staff writer

SSANDY-HAIRED, brown-eyed James Seymour, who has a winsome smile that shows his front teeth, looks perfectly cast as Alvin, the young husband in "I Love My Wife," at the Birmingham Theatre.

He ought to look and act the part. After all, he has played it on Broadway and in Chicago, but he only stepped into the role for this production when "Rifleman" star Johnny Crawford bowed out, due to "artistic differences," during rehearsals in New York.

Jim Seymour was and still is director of the Birmingham show, and his biggest disappointment about having to fill in onstage seems to be that, "I won't get to see the show."

"Everyone's been telling me it looks good," he said backstage last week, the day before the show opened the first preview of its four-week run.

LIKE THE naive character, Alvin, whom he plays in "I Love My Wife," Seymour is from Trenton, N.J. There, perhaps, the similarity ends. The multi-talented Seymour, who is primarily an actor, has been enjoying his change of pace as director. During the interview, his mind-set seemed more that of someone behind the scenes than of a star-conscious performer.

"This isn't my dressing room," he said unconcerned, as he sat down to talk in what is traditionally the "star dressing room" at the Birmingham Theatre. The role of Alvin is the pivotal, main role around which the show revolves.

Seymour looks somewhat like Bobby Morse (from "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying") "A young Bobby Morse," he conceded, reminding that time has passed and Morse is probably in his 50s now. Seymour's looks have also been compared to "a young Richard Basehart," and he appears to prefer the comparison to this more serious actor.

Back in the 1970s he did a Stroh's commercial, playing a young man who impressed his date's father by asking for that brand of beer.

Fresh-faced is perhaps behind him. In TV commercials, he is being cast as "the young father — at least lately, as the lines creep up. I am 33," he said.

NO LINES are visible on his still-boyish face, but Seymour is maturing with apparent ease. "I'm expecting a son — or daughter — in July. I feel more comfortable in the father role."

Married to actress Libby McNeill, he recently moved back to New Jersey, living in Short Hills, which is part of Milburn. "The community is really a bedroom community for New York," he said.

The couple met at a theater in North

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— James Seymour

Carolina which she had started with a number of other people. "I was a guest artist in 'Whose Life Is It Anyway?'" he said. "She had the lead in one of the 'Texas Trilogies.'"

"They didn't see each other for about two years but kept in touch. 'Last spring we got reacquainted and were married last September,'" Seymour said.

She had been living in New York, Seymour, who lived in New Jersey for 12 years, had just moved back to New Jersey to an apartment his family had available, where he also has a working office.

"I LOVE My Wife" isn't the first show the actor has directed. He directed "All the Way Home" at the Ensemble Studio Theatre in New York and took the show to the Peterborough (N.H.) Players, "one of the oldest summer theaters in the country."

He also taught at Colorado College, directed a student production of "Hot! Baltimore" at Franklin Pierce College in New Hampshire and directed



STEPHEN CANTRELL/Well photographer

Director/actor James Seymour, who is frequently cast as a young husband, in real life is a father-to-be. He stars as Alvin in the Birmingham Theatre production of the Broadway musical "I Love My Wife."

"Krepp's Last Tape" at the Museum School of Boston.

Seymour's second off-Broadway show was "Small Craft Warnings," a production that saw him playing both a role onstage as the pickup Bobby and later behind-the-scenes as stage manager. "Small Craft Warnings" is probably the best-known of the later work by playwright Tennessee Williams, who died just about a year ago.

To keep the show going, Williams appeared in the cast and Seymour remembers when, as stage manager, he had to shush Williams for being noisy

backstage. "How do you get Tennessee Williams to be quiet during his own play?" he said.

Seymour recalled that Williams "loved to mingle with people" and also that he was "incredibly sensitive." "He came into the dressing room in tears one day because a stranger had insulted him on the street."

HE BELIEVES Williams' strength as a playwright stemmed from a lack of protective armor that most people have built up. "What was so wonderful was that he could put that pain on paper."

Seymour had always loved acting and appeared in high school productions. He was in college when he did his first off-Broadway show, "The Next

Voyage of the Pequod," (the ship in "Moby Dick"). "It closed opening night," he recalled.

About a year-and-a-half after "Small Craft Warnings," he played the role of Mike in the revival of Michael Weller's "Moonchildren," which proved to be a hit.

Although Seymour sings, clowns and dances in "I Love My Wife," he admitted, "I'm not a big fan of musical comedy."

"I am a singer, and I play piano and guitar," he said.

Seymour was hired for the Broadway production by the play's author, who had seen him work.

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