

# Happiness is family show about Galbreths

Performances of the First Theatre Guild of Birmingham production of the comedy "Belles on Their Toes" continue at 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, May 4-5, and a senior-citizens matinee (free to seniors) at 2 p.m. Saturday, May 5, at Knox Auditorium of the First Presbyterian Church, 1669 W. Maple, Birmingham. For ticket information, call 689-4117.

By Debi Barsamian  
special writer

"Belles on Their Toes," presented by the First Theatre Guild of Birmingham, provides an evening of pleasant entertainment by families and for families.

First Theatre Guild has no age requirements in its membership. Consequently, entire families may be involved in a production. One of the goals of the organization is to provide an opportunity for "generational togetherness." And "Belles on Their Toes" is the perfect vehicle for this goal.

This happy little drama by William Rose is a sequel to "Cheaper by the Dozen," detailing the trials and tribulations experienced by the Gilbreth family after the death of the father. Despite the trauma, the family somehow manages to carry on, and by play's end everyone is cheerful.

The cast is large. We see the comings and goings of 11 children, the bustling entrances and exits of the lovable family handyman, the intrusions of do-gooder Cousin Leonora, gentlemen callers, police visits... you get the drift.

THE PLAY is fast-



Debi Barsamian

paced, and directors Linda Kaufman and Don Joliffe have done a fine job orchestrating the move-

ments of each cast member.

No one is over out of place. No one is ever blocked from view. Cast members are confident, and action is direct and seemingly spontaneous. This is an accomplishment for such a large cast, with so many young actors.

And everyone in the cast does his or her best to present a believable character and an enjoyable play. Special performances should be mentioned.

Shawn McAllister and Matt Gray give top-notch portrayals of the two oldest brothers, Frank and Bill. They "handle" their older teen-age sisters with aplomb.

ELISSA SARD also gives a superior performance. She is just delightful as the overbearing do-gooder Cousin Leonora. This is Elissa's first stage endeavor, too. Let's hope her acting efforts continue.

Dave Clifford is a pleasure as the easily insulted but warm-hearted handyman, Tom. He's at his best in the final scene when he tries to explain why he hit Cousin Leonora with a tennis racket. His laughter is contagious.

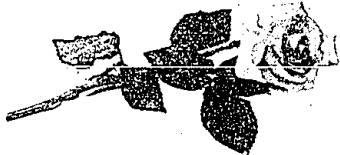
The technical aspects of the production also are sound. Jeff Despard has designed and built a pleasing living room that authentically represents the time period in which the action takes place.

Costumes, for the most part, are equally consistent with the period. In most cases, make-up, too, is effective.

There is a problem with Tom the handyman's facial make-up, however. It is used to excess and is not successful in transforming a young man to an old man. But it should be noted that Dave Clifford might contribute to his own transformation by slowing down his movements.

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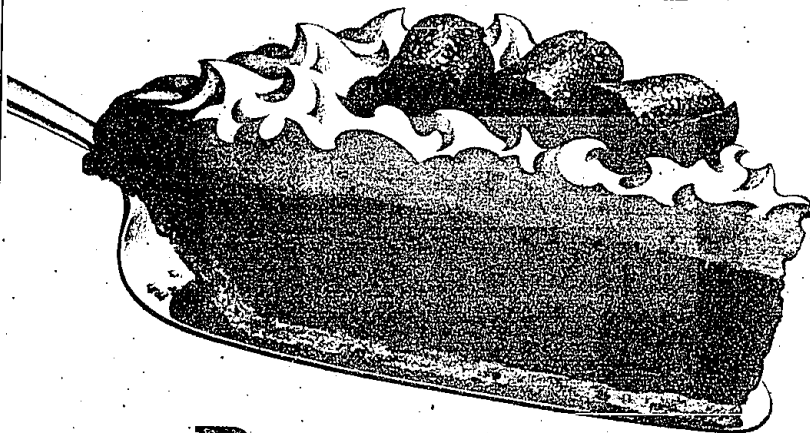
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