

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



O&E

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'Fantasticks' has heart



Cori Carrier (left) is Luisa, Anthony D. Lord is Matt, Buckner Gibbs is El Gallo, John Michael Manfredi is Mortimer and Wallace F. Smith is Henry in the Actors Alliance production of "The Fantasticks," the world's longest-running musical.

Actors Alliance does musical hit

Performances of "The Fantasticks," presented by the Actors Alliance Theatre Company, continue weekends through Sunday, Feb. 23, in Southfield. For ticket information call 642-1326.

By Cathie Breidenbach
special writer

THE FANTASTICKS* by Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt is the world's longest-running musical — for good reason. "Fantasticks" gives audiences characters they can take to heart, and it uses whimsical staging, good music and good humor to tackle the timeless dilemmas of love and parenthood.

The Actors Alliance Theatre Company's production presents a solid, mid-American version of "Fantasticks," a classic musical that successfully mixes frivolity with a mellow dollop of seriousness.

Anthony Lord as Matt, the young man in love, sings with a fine, rich baritone and moves superbly on stage. As a dancer, he must have felt somewhat hemmed in by the limited choreography in the production.

The young lovers, Matt and Luisa, must meet secretly over a wall that runs between their backyards. In the Actor's Alliance production, the lovers tamely step up one step to speak to each other over the invisible wall. Shouldn't they scramble up and down ladders or some other invention to show the high-energy silliness of their young love? Such excess is a charm that goes with being young and idealistically in love.

A MUSICAL calls for song and dance. Director Krista Manfredi under-

review

plays dance in this otherwise nicely staged production set against a backdrop of two outstretched parachutes.

The mute acts as an onstage prop person who never says a word. She can add whimsical color and graceful transitions when she's allowed to float or dance around the edges of the story. Manfredi underplays the mute (Maggie Wysocki) in this production by dressing her in dark, nondescript clothes and restricting her movements.

Although the director skimps on movement and dance, she excels at bringing out the humor in the play and uses well such small comic touches as the flick of El Gallo's neck scarf.

Buckner Gibbs as the gallant narrator, El Gallo, has a fine voice and an imposing presence. His El Gallo is wise, tender and all manner of good things. It's a prejudice, I admit, to want El Gallo to be an authority on the ways of the world and to be mysteriously exotic, too. An accent would help; almost any would do if it carries with it the aura of romantic places like Spain, France, or an island of the Caribbean.

The accent's not crucial, but the romance is, Gibbs' all-American ways and his midwestern accent don't exude the same romantic worldliness of other El Gallos in the long list of talents who have played the role. His winning way with a scarf brings humor — but not mystery to the part.

Continued on Next Page

Big Bird stars in Sesame Street Live stage show

"Sesame Street Live" will present the "Missing Bird Mystery" on stage Friday, Jan. 31, through Sunday, Feb. 16, at Cobo Arena in Detroit.

In the 90-minute production, Big Bird is reported missing from 123 Sesame Street and the famous fowl's friends set out to find him.

Tickets are on sale at the Joe Louis Arena Box Office and all Ticket World

Outlets. To order tickets by phone, call \$67-7500. The Cobo Arena Box office will be open 1½ hours before showtime.

Bert, Ernie and Oscar are among other Sesame Street characters appearing in the show. The expedition will take a break from sleuthing to perform such songs as "Rubber Duckie."

"People in Your Neighborhood" and "Sing." Audience members may get into the act by clapping their hands, stomping their feet, answering questions and singing along to various numbers.



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