

'Nine' is a real coup

Performances of the Theatre Guild of Livonia-Redford production of the musical "Nine" continue through March 1 at the playhouse in Redford. For ticket information, call the box office at 522-8357.

For the third time in recent years, the Theatre Guild of Livonia-Redford has beaten the touring, professional-theater companies to the punch.

The guild is presenting the Michigan debut of the Tony Award-winning musical "Nine" (The others were "The Dresser" and the musical "Baby.")

"Nine" is a sophisticated, polished production featuring solid acting and a large cast with generally excellent singing voices.

Warren Reinacker, who stars as Guido, also designed the stunning set (a Venetian spa in white marble), which establishes the right mood. Judy Pierson's costumes are outstanding (especially the dazzling showgirl gowns). Call Susan Mack's lighting successfully makes the many transitions from fantasy to reality and back again. Jack Pier-



Bob Welbel

son's musicians never miss a beat.

And director Jim Posante has somehow managed to scale down a big Broadway spectacular to the relatively diminutive dimensions of the guild's stage.

A HALF DOZEN or so roles were eliminated. No matter. Fifteen women and three boys remain to invade and harness the mind of one Guido. He is an Italian film director and lifelong womanizer.

He has an attack of writer's block — retreats to a Venetian spa in search of the creative muse — but instead can think of nothing but the woman of his life. What follows is sort of a Broadway version of Willie Nelson's song, "Here's to All the Girls I've Loved Before."

Reinacker is excellent as the woman-obsessed Guido, who rushes

from woman to woman, trying in vain to separate reality from tormented memories and his imagination that the women are burning on him. As the story unfolds, Mark Teich displays a fine voice as the young Guido.

Clody Phelps gives a strong, sensitive performance as his long-suffering "understanding" wife, Luisa. Clody Gonzales is very good as a beautiful young woman who is tired of being Guido's eternal protegee. And libretto Jacqueline Eastman, in a lacy, flesh-colored body suit, is most provocative as Guido's seductive mistress, Carla.

ALSO TURNING in good performances as various women in Guido's life are Joan Irwin, Elaine Rippe, Sandy Liddell, Cynthia Setley, Nancy Villeneuve, Lucinda Hawkins and Patricia Jones. Andy Phelps and David Washburn appear as Little Guido's schoolmates.

The ensemble work of Dana Berry, Carla Gray, Wendy Milazzo, Yvonne Neimann and Loretta Scheel is very good, as they play a variety of roles.

Bob Welbel of Westland is a freelance writer, who has spent more than 25 years in community theater as a director, designer and performer.



Avigdor Zoromp

Musicians are superior to selections on program

The Salzburg Musici, a high quality European chamber group, made its local debut at Orchestra Hall last week. Formed in 1980 in Salzburg by Helmut Zehetmair, a distinguished violinist and faculty member of the famous Mozarteum, the members of this group are largely from this prestigious institution. The conductor, Oswald Koblmann, who had extensive training in Europe and the Soviet Union, joined the group in 1985.

The program featured works by Vivaldi, Handel, Bach, Mozart and Janacek. The wholesome tone quality of the Salzburg Musici makes it clear to the listener that it represents the real thing, rather than an imitation or substitute. In the baroque works, the use of vibrato was reduced, but not to the extent of making the music dull and artificial.

The Vivaldi Concerto in A Minor for Strings and Continuo was cheerful and bouncy making even some of the repetitious aspects of Vivaldi's style sound essential. In Handel's Concerto Grosso Op. 6, No. 9, the give-and-take relationship between the smaller group of soloists and the larger ensemble was well defined.

NADIA SALERNO-Sonnenberg may be familiar to area audiences. She appeared some two seasons ago at the Meadow Brook Festival, performing the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto.

This time, she joined the group to perform Bach's Violin Concerto in A Minor. The purity of her tone, during her previous appearance, was enhanced on this occasion. Moreover, her approach has vastly matured. Her tone, which had small dimensions, was nevertheless effective and compelling.

The silvery outline of her part was always sharply defined among the rest of the instruments, even though it wasn't substantially louder.

The two non-baroque compositions featured the often-played Mozart short Divertimento in D Major K. 356 and the Suite for String Orchestra, an early work by Janacek. The smooth phrasing of the Mozart Divertimento was among the most esthetically pleasing ones. Even the seemingly abrupt changes appeared as delicate foldings of silken material, with no sudden turns and bends.

The rarely performed Janacek work was written before the composer's style had settled. Stylistic in-

fluences of Dvorak, Brahms, even Grieg can be detected. While this work has some charm, it didn't strike me as very profound.

While the performance level of the Salzburg Musici is almost beyond reproach artistically, the program itself left something to be desired.

ONE DRAWBACK was the high concentration of baroque items — one or two should have been enough. Also, Sonnenberg should have been scheduled to play more than the tone short Bach concerto. Granted, quality is more important than quantity, and one can't argue about the quality of a Bach concerto. But this principle, like any other shouldn't be pushed too far.

Finally, there are more suitable and impressive selections from the Romantic period than the Janacek work. While the latter may deserve some exposure, it shouldn't be the only representative of such a rich and significant period.

There is no doubt that the musical and artistic level of the Salzburg Musici is impressive. However, their impact would be vastly increased with more judiciously selected programs.

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