

Singer to give 5 shows

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She thinks Birmingham is an ideal location for cabaret singers to perform. Praising the attractions of Birmingham and the surrounding suburbs, she said, "It's a great area, one of the top places in Detroit."

For her engagement at Puchinello's, Whiting will sing songs by her father, composer Richard Whiting (who worked with Johnny Mercer as lyricist), songs by Mercer (who sometimes wrote both his own music and lyrics), and also some songs from her new album, "The Lady's in Love With You" is the album, on the Audiophile label. Whiting also recently authored her autobiography, "It Might As Well Be Spring," published early last year. The book title's from a Rodgers and Hammerstein song.

WHITING IS currently involved in two shows headed for the stage. "My friends have a play and wrote a part for me," she said. The show, being done in workshop, is "I Love You Jimmy Valentine," based on an O'Henry story. Both a movie and a play have been presented about Valentine, a safecracker. The new production is a musical version.

"I will play Hattie," Whiting said. "She's bold and brassy, full of life. She will sell you anything."

Another show she's working on is a musical called "Dream," based on the life of Johnny Mercer. "The Mercer show is very close to my heart," she said. "He was my mentor. He started me on Capitol Records."

Whiting holds the rights to the

production and hired a writer, who has completed the script. Now she's looking for a director and cast.

In the musical, featuring all of Mercer's songs, cast members will play mythical characters in the 1940s. One of them is supposedly Johnny Mercer. Whiting hopes to get someone like Bobby Morse to star in this role. She's also looking for someone like Maureen McGovern for the show, she said.

Whiting wants to cast Carol Woods in "Dream." Woods, an English performer, appeared with Whiting in a concert show about Mercer. Whiting, too, will appear in "Dream."

The production will be presented in workshop. She'd like to see it land on Broadway, but "I want to take it around the country first. Broadway can be a one-night stand."

WHITING RECENTLY performed, to rave reviews, at the Algonquin in New York, which she calls "the most famous hotel room." She returns to the Algonquin Tuesday, Jan. 5, and will stay there through February.

"The big nightclubs are gone. We have the smaller rooms. The most successful things today are the comedy rooms," she said, "and today's entertainment scene and how it affects the cabaret singer."

Dinner shows Friday-Saturday at Puchinello's are \$42.50 per person. After-theater cabaret is \$15 per person. Sunday dinner and show is \$42.50 per person. For more information call 540-7294.

Dwelleys shine in 'Gin Game'

Performances of the Main Stage Theatre Guild production of "The Gin Game" continue at 8 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays, Dec. 11-12, 18-19, and 2 p.m. Sundays, Dec. 13 and 20, at Groves High School, 13 Mile at Evergreen Road in Beverly Hills. Tickets are \$2 general admission, \$5 for seniors.

Enter Dee Dwelleys as Fonsia Dorsey, a 71-year-old diabetic in a long, tacky bathrobe. Enter Dike Dwelleys, as Weller Martin, afflicted with "an advanced case of old age," in an even crumlier bathrobe.

The two characters meet on the shabby porch of an old-age home. Weller, missing work, takes card games seriously. Fonsia could care less about cards, but she likes Weller's company so he teaches her to play gin rummy. Alas, Fonsia can't seem to lose. . . . And the audience is instantly caught up in D.L. Coburn's searing, blackly humorous play "The Gin Game."

The Main Stage Theatre Guild has given us a marvel of a production, due in large measure to Edgar A.

Guest III's direction and the experienced presence of the Dwelleys. There are holes in the script of this drama that deals honestly with society's condescending attitudes toward the aged. The Dwelleys make us forget the holes while we watch Dike's foot beat time ever more insistently as he counts the cards, and Dee's face change from bemusement to confusion and rage.

The play seems to be telling us that we can't outgrow our failings, can't change our natures, can't leave the past behind, can't really touch each other. Yet these characters develop a bond.

AS WELLER and Fonsia, the two sharp, brainy oldsters, learn about each other, they grow increasingly savage toward each other.

"Gin Game" lays the theory that "age brings wisdom" thoroughly to rest. The agonizing parts Fonsia and Weller share and guest at, and hurt each other with, turn them into a couple who finally hurt each other so much they can no longer help each other.

Practical Fonsia can't understand



Helen Zucker

Weller's terror-filled dreams and calmly calls them "just nerves." Weller can't understand Fonsia's feelings as a young wife hurt by a drunken husband and her hard years as a single, divorced mother.

It's hard to believe that Fonsia has bankrupted herself and left her only asset, a house, to the church, rather than to her son because her son has looked up his father. And we are left uncertain about the nature of Weller's "personality disorder," and just how this once-wealthy man has also landed on the welfare rolls. The viewer's imagination is left to fill in the gaps. But however one fills them, there is no denying the fact that

in the hands of the Dwelleys, Fonsia and Weller are a riveting pair.

"Gin Game" raises issues about family relations, nursing home care and programs that patronize rather than help older people stay in touch with the world intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. It's an ambitious, timely play, and it deserves a large audience.

Congratulations to Gary Baldwin and crew for the wonderfully seeded set, and to C.J. Nodus for having the wits to produce "Gin Game." Lighting by Jason Stoffer was effective. Sound by Sibelius and cast was flawless.

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