

'Blithe Spirit' captures style of Noel Coward

Performances of "Blithe Spirit" presented by the Troy Players, continue through Saturday at the Troy Community Center. For ticket information, call the box office at 879-1285.

The Troy Players production of "Blithe Spirit" captures the essence of Noel Coward's wicked, British sense of humor. The cast of seven, under Patilomena Somers' swift, knowing direction, performs with grace and style. Somers is a director who fully understands not only the play but the genre she and her cast is working with.

If the rest of the season is on a par with the quality of "Blithe Spirit," then Troy Players has taken a quantum leap forward in the quality of its productions.

Sylvia Rowell, an experienced actress, is quite wonderful as intelligent Ruth Condomine. Her diction is accurate, her expressions of wifely concern and jealous exasperation are hilarious and touching. She's a mature wife, a woman of the world who finds herself in an impossible situation. Rowell manages to convey all the nuances the Catch-22 role calls for.

Ruth Caswell is equally fine as sturdy Madame Arcati, the medium who bikes everywhere. Caswell conjures up an era when people dabbled in seances, autosuggestion, hypnosis — a giddy time when people talked about psychiatry and the afterlife as if they were parlor games one could



Helen Zucker

engage in at will.

WHEN CASWELL breathes deeply and waxes ecstatic at the ectoplasmic manifestation she has called up, all the eccentric Madame Arcatis who populated British fiction during the 19th and early 20th centuries breathe before us. Caswell is gutsy and grand.

Stephen Kiersey is wry and amusing as Charles Condomine, the novelist beset by too many wives from too many spheres. The luscious vocabulary and phrases no one seems to use anymore roll from Kiersey's tongue with ease. He makes the dialogue a pleasure to listen to. Kiersey gives us a high-strung Charles, who looks pleased at the idea of being "an astral bigamist."

Myska Reek is the spirit of mischief as Elvira. Reek floats about in spectral veils and gauzy gowns, looking the soul of innocence until she starts smashing objects, oiling the staircases and turning on her theme song. "I'll be Loving You Always." Elvira's idea of love is pretty horrifying, but Reek understands that "Blithe Spirit" is high comedy, and

wit matters more than high ideals in the Condomine living room.

The wonderfully nasty, witty people who populate Noel Coward's universe are helped by Pat Morrow as Mrs. Bradman (Morrow looks wonderful in flowery English garb and preposterous hair), Tom Tighe as the scowling Dr. Bradman and Tania Velinsky as Edith, the "natural" medium and slow-witted maid who seems to be at the bottom of the airy troubles the play deals in.

Jim Miller, Patilomena Somers, Tom Tighe and Connie Patrick have created one of the best sets I've seen in a long time. Deepening the stage, creating the illusion of a garden and adding french doors that allow for strange drafts and lots of slamming make us think we are indeed in a living room in Kent, England, in the 1940s. Kudos to Cora Rector for props and to the production staff for wardrobe and lights.

Helen Zucker has many years' experience reviewing for newspapers and magazines in Michigan, New York and Massachusetts.

upcoming things to do

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from the theater program. First program of the series will be at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Nov. 12 and at 10 a.m. Nov. 14. An 11:30 a.m. Nov. 14, program will be added if demand warrants. The Nov. 14 programs are part of the Concerts-for-Youth Series presented by the Center for the Arts. Tickets for all shows are \$4. Group rates are available. For details, call the Center for the Arts box office at 370-3013.

● IN 'BABY' Birmingham residents Jan Bender

and Patty Ward star in the Royal Oak Stagecrafters production of the upbeat, contemporary musical, "Baby." The show runs at 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays, Nov. 10-12, 17-19, at 2 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 20, and 7 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 12, at the historic Baldwin Theatre. Thursday, Nov. 17, offers general admission seating at a discount ticket price of \$7. Expectant mothers can attend Thursday and Sunday shows for half price. Call 541-6430 for tickets. Jan Bender, who recently moved to Birmingham, and Jim Overholt of Clinton

Township play couple number two — Pam and Nick. The third couple is played by Gary Dirda of Southfield and Cecelia Mac-Smith of Huntington Woods. Tickets are \$10 and can be picked up at the Baldwin box office, or call for reservations at 541-6430.

● COMEDY HIT

The off-Broadway comedy hit, "The Dining Room," begins Friday, Dec. 2, at the Smith Theatre on the Richard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College.

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