

'Wait Until Dark' dated but still intriguing

Performances of the Birmingham Theatre production of "Wait Until Dark" by Frederick Knott continue through Sunday, May 6. For ticket information, call the box office at 644-3553.

By Barbara Michals
special writer

Classic old mysteries never seem to die. Instead of fading away they are revived in an attempt to recreate the thrills they once offered. "Wait Until Dark" at the Birmingham Theatre is a competent production rendered impotent by changing times.

The 1966 play by Frederick Knott is a victim of our changing sensibilities. The plot relies on the premise that an unwary traveler accepted a doll from a mysterious woman at an airport. Now a crazed killer (Tony Musante) and his two accomplices are terrorizing the traveler's blind wife (Bonnie Franklin) in an attempt

to locate the doll, which holds a valuable drug stash.

Who would be foolish enough to accept such a package in our current age of terrorist bombs and posted warning signs? With random, senseless violence filling the daily newspapers, it seems odd that a hardened killer would go to great lengths to con the woman instead of finding a more expedient way to make her talk. Surely it strains credibility that a blind woman walks around Manhattan without fear of being mugged, routinely keeps her door unlocked, and admits strangers unhesitatingly.

As the blind Susy, Franklin gives her character plenty of spunk and does an excellent job of never letting her blank gaze falter. Relying on her other sharp senses, Susy cleverly sees through the murderer's elaborate scam and starts to muster her defenses. That her own plans are not foolproof adds to Susy's credibility, but Franklin never seems all that terrified despite realizing her danger.

MUSANTE ISN'T given much



Barbara Michals

character to work with. He is sufficiently eerie and coldly menacing, at times edging towards caricature. His two accomplices are at least

more interesting, can men conned into unwilling compliance. As the smooth-talking Mike who must earn Susy's trust, Peter Jay Fernandez

has a strong, pleasant delivery despite early line problems Friday night. Edward James Hyland is very fine as the cruder of the pair who poses as a hard-boiled police detective.

Jacqueline Cohen is wonderful as Gloria, Susy's obnoxious young neighbor full of deviousness and blind mood swings. She explains, for example, that her temper tantrum should be forgiven because she only threw unbreakables all over the

floor.

Maureen Heffernan's direction is generally sound, and the production moves along smoothly. As an exercise in deductive reasoning "Wait Until Dark" is still intriguing. It just isn't the thriller it once was.

Barbara Michals teaches high school English in Southfield. A theater critic for the last 15 years, she is an inveterate player who regularly catches up on all the New York productions.

clarification

The scene was between the Duke and the King, not the Duke and Jacques, as was stated in the review of the First Theatre Guild of Birmingham production of "Cinderella."

The review ran Thursday, April 5.

The Duke was played by Brian Eder, 14, of West Bloomfield. Theater critic Mary Jane Doerr says,

"Brian Eder as the Duke was exceptionally strong in his delivery and his acting style. His scene with the King, Tom Roberts, was the best choreographed scene of the afternoon."

Regarding the story about the Early Monday Morning Show comedy revue ensemble, the Attle Theatre benefit performance will be at 7 p.m., not 5 p.m., on Sunday, April 15.

upcoming things to do

• Motown adventure

The Radisson Plaza Hotel at Town Center in Southfield has joined forces with Detroit's Motown Historical Museum at Hitsville USA to offer popular music fans and visitors a weekend combining a pilgrimage to the home of the "Motown Sound" with Greater Detroit dining and hotel accommodations. The hotel and museum are working together to

commemorate Motown's 30th anniversary year. The weekend package for two, dubbed the "Motown Museum Adventure," consisting of a deluxe guest room for Friday, Saturday or Sunday night, a welcome cocktail for two, round-trip shuttle service to the Motown Museum, admission for two, special souvenir and breakfast for two the next morning at Tango's European Bistro. The

package costs \$99 per couple.

• Readers theater

Second performance of the Spring Series of Readers Theater will be given at 4 p.m. Sunday, April 22, in the DeRoy Theater at the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield. A complimentary wine bar will open at 3:15 p.m. The program features David Fox, Harry Gold-

stein, Elizabeth Elkin Weiss, Rube Weiss and Paul Winter and presents works by Jerry Kosinski, Groucho Marx, Arthur Kober, Woody Allen and Moïse Nador. Harold Morris will serve as host of the program. Artistic director is Yolanda Fleischer. Tickets are available at the door beginning at 3 p.m. There is an admission charge. For information, call Readers Theater at 967-4050.

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