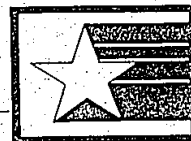


Entertainment

Keely Wygonik editor/953-2105



Thursday, April 30, 1992 (1/4)

(10/78)

Frivolous fun

'Ain't Misbehavin'' gets standing ovation

Performances of the Meadow Brook Theatre production of "Ain't Misbehavin'" continue through May 17 on the Oakland University campus in Rochester Hills. For ticket information, call the box office at 377-3390.



Cathie Breidenbach

MEADOW BROOK Theatre's sassy and sensual production of "Ain't Misbehavin'" shimmers with the glamour of rhinestones, beads and smoochy Harlem nightclub where a man with guitars on his sleeves sits his well-padded behind on a skinny piano bench. Into the small hours of the city morning, he hammers out rhythmic, jazzy, swing tunes on a tinkling upright piano.

The legendary fat man was Thomas "Fats" Waller, and "Ain't Misbehavin'" pays tribute to his music in one of the most infectiously playful Meadow Brook shows in a handful of seasons.

Toe-tapping tunes and exuberant dancing team up with earthy humor, and joyous "jiggle" from the three female leads who come in graduated sizes — a curvaceous, small-sized dynamo (Julia Lema), a middle-sized mamma with a powerhouse voice, (Cynthia Thomas), and a queen-sized Terri White, amply-padded both fore and aft.

THE MALE leads also come in graduated sizes. Gene Barry-Hill, a svelte, long-legged, dapper dude, moves with sinuous grace when he slithers across stage in "The Viper's

Drag" and offers the "upright, suburban" types in the front row a drag on his reeder. Clint Bowers moves with athletic dancer's grace despite his king-sized girth, reminiscent of the 265 pound Fats Waller.

The man at the upright piano, musical director Ron Metcalf, gets back up from a six-man swing band in the musical revue written by Murray Horwitz and Richard Maltby Jr.

The show brings together more than 30 songs, written or made popular by Fats Waller in the 1920s, '30s and early '40s. Memorable songs like "It's a Sin to Tell a Lie," and "Ain't Misbehavin'" share the lineup with the frivolous fun of "Your Feet's Too Big" and "Fat and Greasy" and with dated ditties like "When the Nylons Bloom Again," a World War II lament about the shortage of nylon stockings.

The opening night audience gave the show a deserved standing ovation. Director and choreographer, Arthur Faria rates a generous share of the accolades for his humorously innovative staging.

FARIA DIRECTED the show in New York where it earned an Obie and nominations for the Tony and Drama Desk awards. In some musicals, hands are nuisance appendages at the ends of arms — the bane of a choreographer, not for Faria and his cast.

The 10 extraordinarily articulate hands in this show talk and dance to



Cynthia Thomas (left), Clint Bowers, Julia Lema, Gene Barry-Hill and Terri White appear in Meadow Brook Theatre's production of "Ain't Misbehavin'" through May 17 on the campus of Oakland University in Rochester Hills.

the music with such style they nearly upstage the fancy footwork. Faria's unexpected funny, earthy, and off-beat touches make the staging exceptional — like the addition of a ratty spot light that flirts with Terri

White. The spot squeezes and tickles her until she giggles from the amorous attention. Or when a tipsy, lonesome Cynthia kicks off her shoes and consoles herself by cuddling with her naked foot.

Weird — a little — but bursting with infectious, innovative vitality.

Cathie Breidenbach of West Bloomfield teaches college writing classes and works as a freelance writer.

Flutists, pianist delight audience at Musica Viva! concert

The repertoire for flute and piano is quite limited. This is even more so for works featuring two flutes. In many instances, some works in a flute recital are arrangements of works written for other instruments.

A recent program on the Musica Viva! series has demonstrated that the flute literature can be far wider than many non-flutists realize. Moreover, some of this literature consists of truly superb pieces, which made this program into an event of significant substance.

Ginka Gerova-Ortega and Maarika Jarvi were the two flutists on that program that drew a large audience at Christ Church Cranbrook. They were joined by pianist Francisco Silva.

Maarika Jarvi is the daughter of Detroit Symphony Orchestra music director Neeme Jarvi. Ginka Ortega is the director of the Musica Viva! series, and is well known here through her many performances.

EACH PORTION of the program consisted of three works, two of which were for two flutes and in between a work for a single flute. None of these works is overly familiar to those who don't specialize in it. I found several of the items deserving of a far greater exposure.

The composers featured on the program were Telemann, Carl Hennecke, Ernesto Kohler, Kuhlau, Martinu, and Doppler. Of these, Hennecke and Doppler are recog-



Avigdor Zaromp

nized as composers and masters of the flute. Kuhlau is primarily known through his piano sonatas, which are regularly assigned in piano students.

The two works for single flute, by Reinecke and Martinu, were among the highest points on the program. Ortega tackled the "Undine" sonata in E minor by Reinecke with insight

into its music and mastering successfully its demanding passages of high notes.

Jarvi showed mature insight into the Sonata by Martinu, written in 1945, which was the only 20th century work on this program. The Czech composer Martinu is known for his neo-classical and sometimes neobaroque style, a fact that makes this

delightful sonata accessible to contemporary audiences.

ONE OF the lighter nuances on this program was provided by Kohler's Concerto Duet based on Chopin's theme from his popular Funeral March, from his Sonata No. 2. While it doesn't seem to take the "Funeral" topic too seriously, it did seem to delight the audience.

Kuhlau's Trio Op. 119 is an attractive and lively work, with a contemplative middle movement. Its outer shine complemented that of Doppler's Andante and Allegro, which penetrates deeper into the soul of the instrument.

Silva, whose role was subordinate most of the time to that of the flutists, exhibited impressive capability

in some of his dominating passages. On other occasions, he proved capable of providing good and reliable support without imposing.

The three participants in this event, coming from diverse locations, have had only limited opportunities to meet. Yet, on this program, they sounded like a seasoned, well established group. They deserve the highest credit for providing us an event so remarkably full of content and substance.

Avigdor Zaromp, born in Poland, educated in Israel and the United States, has a Ph.D. in math and has studied piano, music theory and history.

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