

# Mystery has some intrigue

Performances of the Farmington Players production of "Murder by Natural Causes" continue through May 16 at the Farmington Players barn in Farmington Hills. For ticket information call 553-2955.



MARY S. CARLEY

The Farmington Players could learn a valuable lesson by looking at their 1991-92 season. When a community theater takes on a meaty, challenging piece of work, the group almost inevitably rises to the occasion with a production of such quality that it may surprise even itself.

Such was the case this season with both Noel Coward's "Blithe Spirit" and William Inge's "Bus Stop." On the other hand, when a group picks a mediocre work, it usually sinks right into the muck along with it. That, regrettably, is the case with the current production of "Murder by Natural Causes."

The play, by Tim Kelly, is an ad-

aptation of a made-for-TV movie by Richard Levinson and William Link. The characters are given no depth, the dialogue is extremely pedestrian, and there is little suspense, as the plot is revealed in the first scene.

Admittedly, the actors aren't given much to work with, but neither do they seem anxious to improve the situation. Lines are, for the most part, repeated in rote fashion, in an attempt to get through the dull first act, and on to the relatively more interesting intrigue of the second.

To her credit, Lyla Akouri gives about as much life and body to the character of Allison Sinclair as is possible. Mrs. Sinclair is the greedy wife of a successful mind reader who also happens to have a heart condition. She and her young lover, played by Gordon Leon, plan to murder the mentalist by scaring him to death (natural causes, get it?) Mr. Leon certainly looks the part. But his punk-kid persona seems more bored than menacing.

Ron Meyer, as Arthur Sinclair, the intended victim, is pleasant and likable, but he doesn't have any of

the flair one would expect to see in a character with such a flamboyant profession.

The show does pick up a bit in the second act, and features a sequence of murder attempts and betrayals that should keep most audiences amused. That is about the only amusement you're likely to get, as the play is almost totally lacking in humor (another flaw of the writing).

The only real atmosphere in the production is provided by a very nice set, Mr. Sinclair's study.

I have mentioned before in this column that there are an awful lot of murder mysteries floating around out there, and that not very many of them are any good. Farmington Players would be very well served to avoid them in the future and stick to plays of substance, which they obviously do so well.

Mary S. Carley is active in local community theater, both onstage and behind the scenes. He is a member of the Birmingham Village Players and Ridgedale Players in Troy.

# LSO gives quality performance

BY LINDA ANN CHUMIS  
STAFF WRITER

From the opening overture by Mozart to the closing by Wagner, the Livonia Symphony Orchestra under conductor, Francesco Dilliasi in their final concert of the season combined talent, artistic integrity, and spirited enthusiasm in dramatic fashion to give a quality performance.

Opening the program strongly with the overture to Mozart's "Don Giovanni," one of the most treasured in all of music literature, the orchestra's strings sounded bold and spirited.

Schostakovich's "Symphony No. 5 in D Minor" is a challenge for orchestras as it exposes several of the instruments. In the spotlight, flutist Bolynna Howard, clarinetist, Colin Land, bassoonist, James Poe, violinist, Julia Kurtyka, and Kiel Karoub, French Horn, shone like diamonds.

Kurtyka from the Dearborn Sym-

phony filled in for concertmaster, Victoria Hinton who was performing in the Michigan Opera Theatre production of "King Roger." The first violin section sang sweetly against the underlying rhythms of the second.

After intermission, the program showcased the first place vocal and instrumental winners in the LSO's Young Artists Competition held in January.

Dana Lentini, soprano, and Jeremy Van Hoy, euphonium gave polished performances. Any nervousness they may have felt went undetected by the audience.

Lentini sang "Batti Batti" from Mozart's "Don Giovanni," and "Quanto me'n va" from Puccini's La Boheme.

Clear and clean, Lentini's voice was well controlled as she tried to capture the attention of an imaginary

Lentini, who is pursuing a soloist career in opera, sings with Temple Israel Choir in West Bloomfield. Later this month she will perform with the Michigan Opera Theatre in Saint-Saens, "Samson and Delilah."

Van Hoy excelled in an euphonium performance of Holme's "Concerto in F minor," written originally for trumpet. His mature phrasing and perception of the concerto placed him in the ranking of artists twice his age. As one of the judges in the competition said, "he makes music like an opera singer."

Van Hoy, a student of Fritz Kaenzig at the University of Michigan, plans to pursue a career in trombone and euphonium performance.

The orchestra closed its season in fine form with Wagner's romantic opera "Tannhauser."

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