

'A Piece of My Heart' educates, touches audience



SALLY DUBATS

Heartland Theatre Company's production of Shirely Laro's dramatic work "A Piece of My Heart" is not just a play; it is an intense and brilliant statement about the involvement of women in Vietnam and how the insanity of the war changed their lives forever.

"A Piece of My Heart" raises consciousness as it chronicles the lives of six women as they reveal their histories. Ranging from nurses to an intelligence officer to a civilian entertaining the troops, the individuality of each story makes clear the importance of a single, meaningful life — not the numbers and statistics that are reported.

"Heart" is a wonderfully writ-

REVIEW

ten script that educates while touching the audience. Director Kim Sharp's delicate handling of this script never bombarded the audience with facts or statistics, but rather stirred the audience with emotion.

A marvelously talented ensemble cast exposes their souls to divulge the highs and lows of the vital high hopes of enlisting contrasting starkly with the confusion of war and lost friends. Almost worse than war itself was the reaction of Americans upon their return home. The aftermath of "Nam" brought depression, alcoholism, flashbacks and loss of confidence.

Mary E. Rychlewski, Sandra Marquez, and Mar Richi give magnificent personal performances as inexperienced nurses fighting for sanity while dealing with

the horrors of war.

The impossibility of one nurse being responsible for 300 to 350 anguished men while being told "Don't think!" and given uppers is well believed through their talent.

Dinah Lynch is splendid as a thrill-seeking country singer duped into performing for "the boys." A moving performance is given by Sakunah Delaney as Steele, an intelligence officer with vital information who is ignored by the brass, either "because she is a woman or because she is black."

Kim Armat is fabulous as a Red Cross volunteer who becomes an alcoholic and is unable to deal with relationships or commitments after the war.

John Siebert, playing "All the American Men," alternately provides a sense of loss or comedy relief with wonderful skill.

Each actor performs a myriad

of characters. Each performer's artistic prowess is phenomenal, spanning a gamut of emotions, change, growth and eventually hope. Technique is never noticed, just art as its finest.

Heartland Theatre Company producer Jan Radcliff of Birmingham wrote in the program, "It is our hope that in telling the stories of these six women honestly, we will in some way do justice to them all."

Justice has certainly been served to a wonderful script for a piece of history that deserves to be heard.

Sally Dubats of Madison Heights is an actress, director and teacher, who teaches at community theaters in the metropolitan area. She is artistic director of West End Productions headquartered in Livonia.

"A PIECE OF MY HEART"

Theater: Heartland Theatre Company, at the Hilberry Theatre, 4743 Cass at Hancock, Detroit

Closes: Saturday, June 6

Tickets: Range \$10 to \$14.

Seniors and students \$10. Call 577-2972.

Curtain times: Matinee, 10:30 a.m. Thursday, May 27, June 5; 8 p.m. Friday, May 28 and June 4; 8 p.m. Saturdays, May 29 and June 6.

Troy from page 6B

"I just thought it would be good experience for her," said Helen Foster. "We went downtown to the Fisher. I sneaked in back and tried to hide so she wouldn't see me. It came down to her and another girl. When they asked her how old she was, she answered just like I told her to '18 on my next birthday.'"

Six weeks later, Sutton was flown to New York for call backs. "We worried and waited and sat outside the stage door on the curb for two hours," said Helen Foster. "I had mixed thoughts about it. She would be missing her senior year. I also didn't want it to be a

big disappointment. She was a national finalist for the Mickey Mouse Club when she was 15, but was turned down because of her height, she's 5 foot 9." This time Sutton got the part.

"I almost didn't audition," said Sutton. "I was going to go see a show at our rival, Troy Athens High School."

She celebrated her 18th birthday on March 18, and has been on the road with "The Will Rogers Follies," visiting 22 cities, since August.

"It was hard at first," said Sutton. "It was homesick. I missed my family, friends and senior year."

at high school. I fly home a lot."

She recently flew home to go to her senior prom, and has been keeping up with her studies to graduate with her classmates at Troy High School on June 12.

Bodick reserved a block of 100 tickets for the June 5 matinee performance at the Fisher. "We're going to cheer her on, and give her more applause than Keith Carradine," he said.

What advice does she have for those with stars in their eyes? "Go for everything. Don't limit yourself. Audition for everything."

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