

Everything 'coming up rosaries' in 'Nunsense'



VICTORIA DIAZ

Sister Julia Child of God, makes this vicious, and accidentally cleans out her convent (almost), but the convent doesn't have enough money to bury all the dead sisters because

Mother Superior (one of the survivors of The Terminal Supper) purchases a VCR before all the bodies are interred, so the little band of survivors has to cram the remaining remains into a deep freeze while they figure out how to raise money for a decent burial, and what they figure is this: Put on a show — sing, dance, tell jokes, stuff like that, right here on the stage of the Mt. St. Helen's School, just ignore the backdrop, which is scenery for the school musical, "Grease," and everybody is invited and everybody will come, and (very significant detail) they'll bring money.

It'll be swell! It'll be great! You could even say (and writer-lyricist Dan Goggin does) everything will be "coming up rosaries."

Get yourself to this loony, tune-filled, nunnery-biz, "Nunsense," performed by the Village Players of Birmingham, and do so with haste.

With her lilting Irish brogue, hearty voice, and breezy comedic talents, Maureen Cook is a

"Nunsense"

Theater: Village Players of Birmingham, southeast corner of Chestnut and Hunter Blvd. (two blocks south of Maple Road).

Curtain times: 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, May 19-20 & May 26-27, 2 p.m. Sunday, May 21. Tickets: \$12, students \$10. Call (810) 644-2075.

Mother Superior nonpareil. She leads this cast with a sure hand, though certainly never a heavy one, always delivering delightfully.

Holly Hellsten is just about perfect as Sister Hubert, the Mistress of Novices nervy enough to nickname her M.S. "Lake Superior" when the generously-endowed good Mother complains of a tendency to "retain water." If a musical number can be a riot, Hubert's rousing "Holler Than Thou," with a deep-down gospel beat is just that.

Picture a cute cartoon character come to life, and you'll have the awesomely-talented Patty Ward as Sister Robert Anne, Brooklyn-bred "tough guy." Robert Anne yearns for the spotlight, but seems fated forever to saw away at that second fiddle. Always embroiled in a good-natured war with herself and her big-time, she finally gets her chance with the aptly-titled "I Just Want to



Talented trio: Tania Velinsky (left to right), Sally Savoie and Patty Ward in a scene from the Village Players production, "Nunsense."

be a Star," and handily outshines all glittery acrobaticists.

As the flutney novice, Sister Leo, Sally Savoie is comically enchanting, whether "dancing a prayer" in pink ballet slippers, holding up her end of the sister act, or performing what is probably the goofiest ballet number you've ever witnessed, "The Dying Nun."

Last, but certainly not least in

this sometimes-unboly quaint, you'll meet poor, adored Sister Mary Annasia, who can't for the life of her think of who she is. Played winningly by Tania Velinsky, Annasia is a holy card or two short. In the end, with the Board of Health closing in and still not enough money in the till, it will be Annasia who saves the day and retrieves her elusive memory via a little number guaranteed to

punch a dimple into all starched wimples. "I Could've Gone to Nashville."

"Parochial Students" Sarah Ashcraft, Jonathon Baugh, Bess Hart and Mac Vaughney do a good job (mostly from the audience). And when called upon, even players come through here, too!

Director Dan Castle deserves some very special accolades for all kinds of reasons. Here's one:

Making it look easy as pie, he individually showcases each beacon-bright talent to its utmost, while at the same time blending everything beautifully together. What comes out is one zingy, zany, sexy, entertaining soup. Bon appetit!

Victoria Diaz is a Livonia-based freelancer, who specializes in arts and entertainment articles in the metro area.

'Prideful' actresses joust in 'Legends!'



HELEN ZUCKER

considerable skill, makes this play about aging stars work.

Linda Pellicioni, who stepped into the role of Sylvia Glenn on one night's notice, does a wonderful job as a screen legend who has never played anything but tramps. Pellicioni is pinch-hitting for Becky MacIntyre, who was taken to the hospital with appendicitis before opening night. (On Broadway, this is how legends happen.)

On the Ridgedale boards, Linda gives us a believable portrait of a down-on-her-luck, high-spirited, never-say-die, gifted actress. Glenn is a fighter, and she uses everything she's got. Pellicioni not only knows Glenn's lines and her moves, she's also vibrant enough to look good in a silver outfit that makes her look like "the Tin Man in the 'Wizard of Oz.'"

Jo Ewald, in a pretty purple outfit and a pink coat she won't take off, is dry and amusing as Leatrice Monesse, Glenn's nemesis. This legend has spent her life playing saints. The tramp and the saint trade bon mots that grow vicious enough to end the first act in a fit of hair-pulling. The hair turns out to be wigs, and blonde and red wigs, lamps and chairs litter the Park Avenue apartment Glenn pretends is hers.

Act II moves swiftly, less talk and more action. Monesse turns out to be on food stamps. The



Rehearsing: Becky MacIntyre (left), and Jo Ewald of Troy, are given suggestions during rehearsal by director and assistant director Larry and Linda Pellicioni.

evening progresses, thanks to poverty and hashish brownies toward revelations that allow the two rivals to work together. The production is enormously enlivened by Kimberly Cruchon as Aretha Thomas, the savvy maid who befriends Glenn, calls off her own party, and talks sense to the stars. Cruchon's Southern accent is from no discernible place in the U.S., but it's got a sprightly charm of its own. "You belloved, madams!" she says politely. Cruchon plays Jeeves to people as dim as Bertie Wooster.

Patrick Bernard, a terrific dancer, exudes energy as a male stripper who bursts in to do his stuff. Someone, fortunately, forgot to cancel his act. His dancing brings on a spell of mock fainting from Monesse and gyrations from Glenn. The two revert to themselves and evolve into two women who simply want to work.

Kent Martini, as Martin Klemmer, the motor-mouth, off-

Broadway producer who sets the play in motion, is a believably robust liar. He handles Paul Newman's name about as if it were his own, calls three or four people at once from phones in Union Station or his office while pretending to be in Sumatra or Sardi's. Martini does well as a fount of energy who turns out to be a shrewd and not unkind catalyst. He even finds time to leave tickets for someone on a suicide hotline.

Dennis Fitzpatrick, as the policeman who painstakingly mines all the information he's given, looks as innocent as Aretha looks wise. Selma Cohen as Dorothy Coulter, the woman who owns the apartment the assorted mayhem takes place in, does a fine job of being absent.

The set by Jim West and crew does a fine job. Lot of nice touches like the bank of phones and graffiti to the right, the office to the left, and the apartment be-

"Legends!"

Theater: Ridgedale Players, 205 West Long Lake Road, Troy (between Livonia and Crooks Road). Curtain time: 7:30 p.m. Thursday, May 18; 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, May 19-20, 3 p.m. Sunday, May 21. Tickets: Adults \$9, Thursday show \$7, Sunday show \$8 for senior citizens. Includes free coffee/tea and afterglow. Call (810) 433-1572.

teen, bespeak experience. Sound, especially the subway, by Thom Griffin, is great. The Ridgedale Troupe has finished the season in style. Their performance is a tribute to their cohesion, and a way of saying get well to Becky MacIntyre.

Helen Zucker of Oak Park specializes in arts and entertainment.

Celebration marks Israel's birthday

Celebrate the 47th anniversary of the state of Israel Sunday, May 21 at the Maple/Orchard campus of the Jewish Community Center, 6600 W. Maple, West Bloomfield.

There is no charge. The event is sponsored by the Jewish Federation and its Michigan/Israel Connection, with the Jewish Community Center



Guest soloist: International folk and pop star David Broza will be performing at Israel Fest on May 21.

PREVIEW

and "Jewish News." For details, call (810) 645-7878.

Festivities kick off at 1:30 p.m. with a 3.5 mile "Walk for Israel." Jewish War Veterans will begin the walk with the help of the Harrison High School Marching band. They will be joined by members of the community, and participants of the Michigan Miracle Mission II who will walk through the West Bloomfield Community.

At 3 p.m. Israeli child entertainer Chani Nachmias will present a one-woman show of acting, pantomime, comedy and song. Throughout the day kids will have the opportunity to participate in hands-on activities to learn about the history and life of the Jewish Federation's Partnership 2000 Central Galilee Region. Carnival rides and a climbing wall for teens will also be available.

Israel's jazz band, Eata will perform its blend of rock, jazz, Israeli, Bulgarian and Mediterranean rhythms at 4:15 p.m. The Aviv quartet plays a wide variety of instruments and fuses their varied and different influences of music.

Michael HarPaz will perform original Hebrew music at 6:15 p.m. Hiller Day School Choir will accompany him during part of his performance. International folk and pop star David Broza, who has recorded 10 albums, takes the stage at 7:30 p.m. He weaves the musical melodies of flamenco, guitar, blues, and rhythms of the Middle East with his spoken poetic Hebrew verse.

There will be a fireworks display after his performance. In case of rain all performances will be moved inside the center.

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