

# Hilberry Announces 1968 Repertory Bill

Five new productions, including three classics and two large-scale contemporary plays, have been announced by the Hilberry Classic Theatre for its Wayne State University Centennial season repertory, opening in January. A revival of last season's record-breaking success, "A Midsummer Night's Dream," will be performed during the fall.

The new repertory is headed by two of Shakespeare's greatest plays: "Hamlet," his best known tragedy, and "Twelfth Night," perhaps his best romantic comedy.

The other classic is Georges Feydeau's "A Flea in Her Ear," one of the masterpieces of French farce, being successfully revived at present both here and abroad.

The contemporary works, both from the present decade, are John Whiting's "The Devils," based on Aldous Huxley's "The Devils of Loudon," and Jean Anouilh's "Becket," the French playwright's dramatization of the friendship between Henry II and Thomas Becket.

The fall performances of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" begin with three

matinee performances on Oct. 4, 6 and 11. Evening performances are Friday and Saturday evenings, Oct. 13 and 14. Wednesday matinees and Friday and Saturday evening performances will continue through Dec. 9. In addition to "Midsummer Night's Dream," a limited number of previews of some of the new productions will be performed.

The new season officially opens Wednesday, Jan. 10, with "A Flea in Her Ear," followed by "Twelfth Night" the next night, Jan. 11. "Hamlet" will be added the second week, opening Jan. 17. "The Devils" will be launched in February and "Becket" in March.

Once open, all plays will continue to perform in weekly repertory until the season closes May 25. There will be one dark week, the week of March 24, which falls between the university's winter and spring quarters.

The ticket sale for the new

group and student performances will be accepted in September. Information may be obtained by calling 833-5151.

The new season's opener, "A Flea in Her Ear," is one of the most famous plays by Feydeau, scripted in France as the country's greatest comedy writer since Moliere. Although new to the English-speaking stage, it has been a great success for the National Theatre, and another Feydeau, "Keep an Eye on Amelia," has succeeded in English translation and in a free version, "Look After Lady" by Noel Coward. "A Flea in Her Ear" is typical of Feydeau's precision and technique, probably not surpassed anywhere in comedy writing.

The Shakespeare comedy, "Twelfth Night," contains some of his most famous characters: Sir Toby Belch, a close kin of Falstaff; Viola, one of his most interesting women; the simpliciton Sir Andrew Aguecheek and the renowned Puritan, Malvolio. The play masterfully blends high comedy, farce and romance in a complicated story of twins and three cases of love at first sight.

"Hamlet," one of the great tragedies of all time, is Shakespeare's transformation of a Scenepian play of revenge. The role of Hamlet, favorite of actors, is probably his most complex and perennially fascinating, receiving innumerable interpretations by a wide range of actors through the years.

A play from our decade, "The Devils" reverts to the Elizabethan era for its large-

scale and powerful treatment. It was commissioned by the Stratford-on-Avon company and first performed by the Royal Shakespeare company in London. It is the story of an early 17th-century priest, and how those in power, jealous of his brilliance and influence, take advantage of the hysteria in a cloister to condemn him to death by diabolism.

"Becket," another current treatment of the past, is written on a larger scale than most Anouilh plays, but preserves his view of history's saints and heroes as ordinary men. Anouilh's bitter-sweet style brings out the beauty and irony of this friendship between a king and the companion that became his worst enemy when named archbishop.

At the top of the page, a large, stylized graphic of a curtain is shown, with the words "CURTAIN" written vertically along its edge. The curtain is depicted with folds and texture, and the word "CURTAIN" is in a bold, serif font.

## Wally Roberts UP' GOING CURTAIN

"Henry, Sweet Henry" a fresh, bouncy new musical is making its way to the stage at the Fisher Theater for the next three weeks. A host of talented theatrical magicians are doing their damndest to turn this venture into a smashing success.

Right now old Wally feels "Henry, Sweet Henry" strikes far too many sour notes. The script needs more than lightening. It needs a sense of direction.

"Henry, Sweet Henry" suffers in a sense from being too successful as a movie. "The World of Henry Orient" was the title of the original screenplay. Just about everybody that worked on the film is engaged in trying to transform this former flick into a live theatrical attraction.

If you'll recall, the movie dealt with the adventures of two teenagers that had a crush on a kooky concert pianist. His specialty was electronic music. The screen treatment, with Peter Sellers as the pianist, utilized the tongue-in-cheek satirical approach to the hit. Don Ameche, the man remembered for portraying Alexander Graham Bell in film circles, plays the kooky pianist.

Ameche is too suave and debonair for the role. His forte is not "wayout" humor. Not that Mr. Ameche doesn't do a brilliant job as Henry Orient. He is truly superb. It's just that the script does not seem to really fit him comfortably.

Tropically enough, the two wild telephone sequences are showstoppers and why shouldn't they be with Mr. Ameche and his Alexander Bell training.

Basically though, "Henry, Sweet Henry" must make up its mind whether it will be a realistic treatment of a young girl unwanted by her rich parents who substitutes this crazy infatuation for the pianist for real affection or a gay, light frothy slice of fun.

Robert Randolph's highly mobile scenery is done in light, pastel shades and basic cartoon strip style. It would seem that Mr. Randolph was lead to believe that the stage version was going to be quite light and frivolous.

Naturally Johnson who wrote the book for this new musical has inserted the serious realistic note on too many occasions. The first act finale, instead of ending on the wild, ridiculous seduction scene comes to a standstill with a short, dramatic encounter between mother and daughter.

"Henry, Sweet Henry" veers to the acid, acerbic side of life too quickly and too often during much of the evening. Only one song seems to be headed for the best seller lists: "Pretty Thing." The title song "Henry, Sweet Henry" could be infectious if Bob Merrill would give it more exposure.

Robin Wilson who plays the true lead in this mixed-up musical, labors through the entire show with the wildest costume ever to grace an actress. Director George Hill has her wear a worn-out mink coat. Yes, I said a ripped mink coat... throughout the show. No doubt, the "beach appearance" is to lighten the comic effort. It left me cold and even irritated my sense of visibility.

In spite of the mink coat though, Robin Wilson steals what little show there is. Her voice is clear, beautiful, and a joy to listen to. She makes the most of her time on the stage, which is constantly, Mr. Ameche and Carol Bruce may have star billing, but they are really minor characters. Robin Wilson and Neva Small carry the show on their petite shoulders.

A hippie number replete with swarms of bubbles starts the second act off in a pleasing manner, but again it only tends to confuse. I'm afraid the producers of "Henry, Sweet Henry" have neither the ragamuffin appeal in their talented youngsters that "Oliver" was blessed with. Nor do they have the good music and exceedingly funny lines that helped "Bye, Bye Birdie" become a smash hit.

"Henry, Sweet Henry" needs work. The producers have eight weeks to try and rescue their half million dollar investment. Let's hope they do.

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