

Staging 'Anastasia' Is Test Of F'ton Players' Ingenuity

When the curtain goes up on the Farmington Players' production of "Anastasia" Feb. 5, few in the audience will be aware of how much Yankee ingenuity was required to bring this story of a Russian princess to life.

"Anastasia" is a costume play set in 1920 demanding an unusual set. To create it the Players improvised with skill and imagination.

But "make believe" is the essence of the theater.

AS HE HAS for most of the group's plays, Clifford Dixon created the set design for "Anastasia." Because of the small stage, the Farmington Players have to design a completely new set for each production.

The project for "Anastasia" required creation of an aura of magnificent grandeur on a stage measuring 20 by 15 feet. The new production is set in an old German mansion. Producer Don Briggs constructed the set, aided by Dixon, Joanne Kaman and George Nahastoll. One of their problems

was the building of four doorways in a scaled-down mansion without making the room look as if it were all doors.

The four worked until 3 a.m., one morning building circular staircases with six steps spiraling downward looking spacious and grand in a very limited space.

PEARL BRIGGS and Peggy Sisto had the problem of making the set look bare and dreary as required by the first act and transforming it into an impressive Russian imperial court by the third act.

Problems of staging were compounded by the fact that the Player's stage in the barn on 12 Mile Rd. has virtually no off-stage space. Professional theaters have elaborate and expensive systems of rigging over the stage on which to "fly" furniture and scenery overhead.

To make their set changes possible, the Players are going to "fly" some of the set furnishings on homemade, inexpensive, and entirely unorthodox rigging.

It fell to Don Briggs to dress the throne used in the third act. He created two, tall, impressive candle-torches out of porch posts, salad bowls and lots of gift paint. Some old red

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velvet draperies, purchased years ago at a Cranbrook rummage sale by some far-sighted Player, will be used to bolster the throne and a couch.

PROP CHAIRMAN Betty Craig's crew has built a stage version of a "peach," an old German tile stove. A life-sized poster of Anastasia required in the script is already in the works and the crew is scouring the area in search of a bronze horse statuette. Luckily they had on hand an antique typewriter, vintage 1920, which will be used by the cast.

All areas of the Player's Barn are bustling with activity. Members are putting up wallboards in the auditorium, workers are building and painting the set, the cast is rehearsing in the social room, costumes are being tried on and altered in the dressing room and someone is always in the kitchen discussing technical problems over coffee.

TICKETS are still available for performances of "Anastasia," which will be given Feb. 2, 3, 9, 11 and 17. A special half price rate is available to high school students for opening night, Feb. 2.

Reservations for all tickets can be made with ticket chairman, Noral McNeely, 474-2749. Tickets are also available at Webster's House of Magic.

Big Budget

The American Petroleum Institute plans a sharp increase in its expenditures for air and water conservation activities in 1968.

The institute's annual budget for this purpose has been approximately \$2 million for the past two years. The 1968 total may reach \$3 million.

The exact amount depends on final plans now being made for a new program of air pollution research in which the oil and automotive industries and the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare will participate.



STARS IN 'ANASTASIA'—Dennis Broadhead, who in real life is an advertising agency layout man, has the role of the artist, Petrov, in the Farmington Players' current production of "Anastasia." The drama opened its run of three weekends Feb. 2 in the Players Barn on 12 Mile Rd. west of Orchard Lake Rd.

Women To Prod Judges

A women's court watch, in which female teams will maintain criminal court-room vigils to observe the conduct of judges and other public officials in criminal trials, will be started in Metro Detroit by State Sen. N. Lorraine Beebe, R-Dearborn Heights, a member of the State Senate Crime Investigating Committee.

The idea is one originated by Indianapolis newswoman Margaret Moore and is designed to prod prosecution and sentencing of lawbreakers, in a crackdown on the mounting problem of crime in the street.

Various courts and some judges are under attack, as well as prosecutors, by a growing segment of the public concerned over lackadaisical handling and soft sentences of criminals.

"Never underestimate the power of us women," the lady senator says.

Phone Cranks Need Help

Dr. Anthony F. Panzetta, head of Temple University's Community Mental Health Center, in Philadelphia, says telephone cranks are among the people his center is trying to help, not screen out.

For this reason, Panzetta issued orders this week that psychiatrists and psychologists in the operation's 24-hour-a-day "crisis center" for psychiatric emergencies answer their own telephone.

This way, he said, cranks and other persons who need help with their problems won't "get the runaround" which he says isn't intentional but comes from secretaries' lack of professional training.

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