

Lots of heart minus soul

By BARBARA MICHALS
"You gotta have heart; all you really need is heart," sings the chorus in "Damn Yankees," the current production of the Farmington Players.

The Farmington version has what it takes for the heart of a successful musical — talented performers, memorable music and a script with proven appeal — but it somehow lacks soul — that intangible aura of professionalism that community theater sometimes pulls off so well.

Where does it go wrong? One is tempted to blame the director, but Farmington's Raye Bush has 25 years of directing experience behind her.
Each of the play's two acts requires 11 scene changes, a fact that cannot help but fragment the story and slow the pace. Leaving the stage lights on and changing scenes in view of the audience, a popular modern staging practice might have helped the tempo.

SET DESIGN was adequate

and sensible considering the limitations of the Farmington-Playhouse stage. Execution of the sets, however, was amateurish and low-budget, as was what passed for costuming. A strong presentation can rise above such things, but these problems are more noticeable when the overall production lacks polish.

On the positive side, "Damn Yankees" offers a lot of pleasing individual performances. As Joe Hardy, the baseball nut who sells his soul to the devil to help his favorite team beat "those damn Yankees," Bud Matych is delightful. His strong, rich voice is the really outstanding aspect of the show. Peggy Sisto is a bouncy, bubbly Lola, the slinky vamp who seduces men for the devil and always gets what she wants.

Speaking of the devil, Keith Lepard plays the part with great energy and enthusiasm. Lepard's cynicism lacks the subtlety of Ray Walston, who immortalized the role in both the Broadway and film versions of "Damn Yankees," but

Lepard gets good rapport with his audience nevertheless.

HE ELICITS their full sympathy when he "stubs his hoof" or sings the musical lament for the "good old days" of murder and mayhem.

Ceci Orman is also energetic as Gloria Thorpe, meddlesome girl reporter. She and Peggy Sisto do justice to Sylvia Lee's choreography.

Sal Sisto is convincing as Joe Boyd, the baseball fan who is devilishly transformed into baseball player Joe Hardy. June Payne is equally convincing as his abandoned wife Meg, but unfortunately her voice is not up to the demands made of it. Her three duets with Matych emphasize this all the more.

The principal players get some strong support from minor roles. Evelyn Tully and Lois Hill are real bright spots as two over-exuberant baseball fans. Tim Phene, playing the baseball team manager, contributes a strong singing voice.



On vocals

Elizabeth Corrigan will be appearing at The Raven Gallery through Sunday. A singer, she will be in shows at 9:30 and 10:30 p.m. Thursday (Nov. 14) and Sunday and Friday and Saturday at 9:30 and 11:30 p.m. The Raven is located at 29101 Greenfield in Southfield.

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