

Comedy at Sheraton

Thursday, September 16, 1976 OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC (S.F. Re-138X01JD)

'Forum' nice opener for cocktail theatre

By ETHEL SIMMONS

With a well-tended production of "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," the theater at the Pontiac Bloomfield Sheraton got off to a pleasant start Friday.

The new Cocktail Playhouse, as it is called, brought the Broadway musical comedy hit direct from a 15-week run at the Shubert in New York.

Most of the cast in this romp-about a Roman slave who wants his freedom and a young master who falls in love with a virginal courtesan—are from the Arden Award area. The lead role in the show is portrayed by Chita Rivera, Bloomfield Hero.

Keepers is in full control of the part originally created by Zero Mostel, as Pseudolus slave to Hero. To be in control requires the ability to seemingly relax and be merry, and spirit and lilt keep the action moving along as Pseudolus manages to create a case of mistaken identity for his own advantage. Keep everybody out

of everybody else's way at the right time and bring them together when it matters.

CONTRASTING WITH Pseudolus' roundness is the lankiness of Hysterium, slave to Hero's father Senex, portrayed by Calvin MacLean. He is Pseudolus' anxious but willing cohort, even dressing up as a girl to allow the real girl to escape with Hero.

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the answer," he said, explaining that "you don't let people to have dinner."

McHugh said the production company he represents plans to have a circuit of cocktail theaters in Michigan and the United States.

After the run of "Forum" on Friday and Saturday, the show will move to the Pontiac Bloomfield Sheraton, where it is to begin on Aug. 26.

Do I Do" in October, followed by "Pajama Game" in January.

Others in the cast are Ronald Orenstein, as the captain who comes to claim Philia; Robert Seeman, as Erronius, an old man, searching for his long-lost children; and Tom Simonds and Lou Brockway in several roles.

GARY MC HUGH, who originated the concept of dinner theater, gave a brief talk before the performance. McHugh said he thought the name dinner theater back then, when he originated it, was appropriate, as does John Sipos, who also manages to convey dignity and restraint in the role of grey-haired charmer Senex competing with Hero for the courtesan's attention.

Even though the true love of courtesans from Lydia's stable, Tinahabla, with belly-dancer mystery (Subaya or Milade Nejat alternate in the role), Vibrata, is

We believe cocktail dinner theater is

to give the small audience a close look, but patrons would have been more comfortable spread out a little more.

Stage spotlights shone in the eyes of the audience, too, and were more than competition for flickering candlelight on the tables. The theater in the round caused a slight visibility problem due to the Roman columns on stage.

There are a few problems with cocktail theater, however, at the Pontiac Bloomfield Sheraton, one of all, dinner, which you may order separately from the hotel's Chateau Louis Restaurant, is not really very good. Mashed potatoes were served with a scoop of gravy; a steak was greasy; for example. Drinks are available in the cabaret or theater section before the show or at intermission; they rated fair.

In the cabaret theater section, first-night problems were over that perhaps are easily corrected. Tables and chairs were clumped around the stage unattractively.

Curtain Time

CURTAIN TIME

"Godspell" musical unfolding the gospel according to St. Matthew at 8:30 p.m. Friday through Sunday and Sept. 24-25 in Oakland University Barn Theatre on campus in Rochester. Information by calling 377-2215.

"The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail" by Jerome Weidman, directed by E. Lee at Late Night Theatre at 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday at Will-O-Way Repertory Theatre, 775 W. Long Lake Road, Bloomfield Hills. For reservations call 644-4118.

Adelines sell baked goods

The South Oakland County (SOC) Chapter of Sweet Adelines, Inc., will be performing at the Chateau Louis Restaurant from noon to 6 p.m. Saturday at Livonia Mall on Seven Mile and Middlebelt.

The chorus, a four-part women's harmony group, will perform at 8 and 9 p.m. Additional quartets and octet will sing during the afternoon.

"A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" musical comedy at cocktail theater in the round at the Pontiac Bloomfield Sheraton, 1001 Woodward, Pontiac. Performances each Friday and Saturday at 8:15 p.m. Drinks served in the theater. Dinners available in the Chateau Louis Restaurant. Reservations by calling 338-4131.

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