

# Modern-day Shakespeare rivals TV soapers

By GEORGIA KUX

The TV soaper, teeming as it is with characters and convoluted plots, just may have a rival in "The Curate Shakespeare: As You Like It."

The play, an adaptation by Don Nigra, is the current Student Enterprise Theatre production at Oakland University in Rochester.

Some funny, slapstick moments are provided by the players themselves as a modern-day Shakespearean troupe. The troupe has been reduced to seven members and is faced with the monumental task of performing a play with 30 speaking parts. Multiple roles provide the answer.

John R. Roman, for example, plays an actor playing a court clown. He also plays Charles the wrestler, more Ali than Gorgous George, and does trapeze service as Hymen, God of Marriage, as well as a really great apple tree.

High on the list is Elizabeth A. Mar who has but two roles: That of a tearful deer in the Forest of Arden, and Rosalind. Not, mind you, the heroine of "As You Like It."

This Rosalind lives in a sort of Rosalind limbo, having once played the part. Now, forgetful of her lines, her job is to announce the locales in the play or the odd bit of business: "This is it, folks!"

MAR'S ROSALIND is a pretty, affectionate soul, often befuddled but with moments of crisp intelligence. Mar also has a lovely singing voice which lends itself very well to the Elizabethan airs laced through the play.

The dichotomy of the play is apparent when we try to follow the other players. Take Audrey, played by Karen I. Swantek. As Audrey the actress she will perform as Audrey, a slightly wanton country wench. She will also be Rosalind, the real one.

"This daughter of a Duke is banished from court and takes refuge in the Forest of Arden. Here she assumes another role, that of Ganymede, a sharp lad.

Confusing? It is for Audrey the actress. She has an identity crisis in between costume changes. Swantek does justice to all these roles. She's pretty good as a lioness, too.

TO ADD TO the confusion, Nigra adds a dash of Pirandello—from "Six Characters in Search of an Author"—in which the players attempt to act out within the play some of the drama of their own lives. We see lovers quarrel, a young actor unsure of his abilities, and all these goings on play the very hub with the mental processes, which like TV addict's, must remain alert to every changing level in this play within a play and at the same time keep track of all the characters.

It's also a heavy load for the seven Oakland University undergraduate students who must cope with multiple identities and must switch from the melodic flow of Shakespeare to the staccato exchanges of today's lingo. The players rise to the occasion.

MARK SAWSON is a central character, the troupe's manager-cum-director. The spacey Rosalind asks him if he is Shakespeare or God. "I'm just God," he immediately replies. Sawson cleverly caricatures his roles which include a graced 89-year-old manservant and a slow-thinking shepherd two steps removed from Mortimer Snerd.

## Review

Sawson lavishes a special fondness upon the role of the good duke, who has been banished by his rotten brother Frederick. He drifts out in his comely, feathered cap, prattle to its best advantage, mouthing each plume-like Shakespearean word with exultant sounds. Delicious!

"As You Like It" has William, a simple country lad, in love with Audrey, the wanton. It also has as a hero Orlando, the light of love of Rosalind the real.

These roles are the balldick of Roger C. Hassett. When lusty he picks his nose and scratches his crotch. And whether William the actor, William the Oaf or Orlando, Hassett bumbles quite earnestly. He, too, has an identity crisis in the play.

"I just don't think I can play myself again." He's afraid the audience will make fun of him and say he's no good.

IN THE PLAY, love takes place on both the real and illusionary levels. Peter R. May in his actor role, loves and is constantly rejected by his actress counterpart, played by Nancy M. Bright. As Silvius the shepherd, May is scorned again by Bright, this time playing the part of Phoebe the stepdaughter.

Bright is at her brightest as Celin, the coy daughter of Duke Frederick. May's other roles include the melancholy Jacques. He has an identity crisis that borders on madness.

As Shakespeare himself did, author Nigro has developed a new script based on a popular work. In "The Curate" he adds his own imprint.

He brings innocent rustic romings to more earthy couplings, lots in a word from Puck. Furthermore, less maj-

esty, he has his characters revile the bard himself.

Director Thomas A. Aston doubles as costume designer. Associate director is Randall Forté. Scenic designer is Anet Platt. Lighting, which included a

dappled Forest of Arden, is by Tom Hansen.

The play will be repeated Thursday-Saturday on the next two weekends in the Studio Theater of Varner Hall. There will be a matinee Saturday April 2.

## Concert club opens at St. Regis

The Bamboo Ballroom, touted as Detroit's first adult concert club, will open Saturday in the Hotel St. Regis in the New Center area.

The opening attraction will be Peter Allen, who wrote the Grammy Award winning song "I Honestly Love You," which was performed by fellow Australian Olivia Newton-John.

An Australian living in America, he also is described as a New Yorker who lives in southern California. Allen is a writer and performer who blends folk-

singer-songwriter and cabaret-Broad way middle of the road styles.

Allen's recordings on A&M records have become familiar on WNIC, WDRQ and WXYZ in Detroit. Many persons have seen him on national TV on "Dinah" and "The Mike Douglas Show." He is the former husband of Liza Minnelli.

Allen has just been named "Entertainer of the Year" by Alter Dark magazine, which bestowed this

title previously on Bette Midler, Elton John and Barry Manilow.

SON OF BAMBOO Productions, which is behind the Bamboo Ballroom, has produced more than 2,000 concerts in the Midwest during the last nine years.

The concert club in the St. Regis will feature the intimate atmosphere of the plush hotel, with cocktails available. Promoters say they will showcase some of the nation's top names in talent at the Bamboo Ballroom.

## Late bloomers?

Life doesn't stop after age 60. Ruth Gordon received an Oscar nomination at the age of 60, and won an Academy Award for supporting actress in "Rosemary's Baby" at 72. Maggie Kuhn organized the Gray Panthers in 1970 at age 61, and four years later, Millicent Fenwick, then

64, was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Annie Smith Peck, scholar and lecturer, scaled the Matterhorn at age 45, and followed that at age 62 with climbing the 21,280-foot Mt. Coropuna in Peru. She ventured up Mt. Madison in New Hampshire at age 82.

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