

'Arsenic and Old Lace' still brings pleasure

By HELEN ZUCKER

The Meadow Brook Theatre production of Joseph Kesselring's fine old comedy, "Arsenic and Old Lace," is proof that 40-year-old plays, in the right hands, can be quite funny.

Despite some unevenness and a slow second act, the production is enjoyable, and the first and final acts are highly entertaining. Directed by Cash Baxter, the cast manages to capture the special lunacy of the Brewster household.

"Arsenic and Old Lace" continues through Feb. 22 on the Oakland University campus near Rochester.

I want to give extra credit to Peter William Hicks for his terrific set. Hicks

review

and crew have created the kind of old house that only exists in Brooklyn. The mad portrait over the dining room cabinet, the bushes glimpsed outside the door are all just right. So is the off-used window seat.

Jean Barker nearly steals the show as Abby Brewster, the determined little old lady who is bent on poisoning homeless men. She considers arsenic slipped into home made elderberry wine "an act of mercy."

MS. BARKER is a tiny, captivating creature with enormous stage presence. She hops, bounces, and leaps across the stage in a wonderfully funny manner. It's like watching Mary Poppins sail across the rooftops to commit mayhem.

Jeanne Arnold is effective as the more tentative sister, Martha Brewster. Ms. Arnold plays the other half of this Mutt & Jeff duo as a gangling, frightened, dotty, soul of propriety. She looks quite funny hiding behind tiny, feisty Ms. Barker.

The crackpot sisters outwit the entire city, and timid Ms. Arnold has the final word. "Here you are," she says with a soft, friendly smile, holding out a glass of elderberry wine to Mr. Witherspoon, who has come to fetch the Brewsters away to Happydale.

Tom Mahard turns in a fast, deft performance as Dr. Einstein, the plastic surgeon who has teamed up with "nasty" Jonathan Brewster. "Nasty" is a

wonderful understatement to describe a man who argues with his sisters over the number of people they have bumped off.

I enjoyed Jonathan Freeman clumping about in Boris Karloff-Frankenstein get-up, snoring. "Practically everyone in Brooklyn needs a new face," Freeman manages to be both frightening and funny at the same time. No mean feat, after all the spoofs on Frankenstein.

IT'S DIFFICULT to play straight parts, but Kathryn Breech looks so great in those '40s outfits that she's satisfying as Elaine Harper, Mortimer's girlfriend.

Carleton Carpenter isn't quite Cary Grant, but he does look natty in pin-striped suits, and he has a fast way with a line. I enjoyed Carpenter's performance, but it was the only performance that seemed tuned to the '70s rather than the '40s.

Then again, we learn (thank God) that Mortimer, the theater critic, isn't really a Brewster.

Well, maybe that explains his being slightly out of sync with the production. We wonder what he's doing in this sinister household filled with "good works" and dreadful anecdotes. The lift of the brows and the heavy emphasis on going "to bed" as he leaves with Elaine doesn't fit. But Carpenter speaks well and never misses a syllable.

David Green is amusing as Teddy Brewster, whether he is rushing up the stairs shouting, "Charge!" issuing proclamations in a morning suit, or collecting "yellow fever victims."

JOHN A. ROBERTS is believable as Rev. Dr. Harper. So is Todd Hison and Phillip Locker as Officers Brophy and Klein. Craig Collicott, as Officer O'Hara who returns to deliver his endless plot of play he has written, makes you want to kill him.

J.L. Dahlmann is loud and dense as Lieutenant Rooney, the cop who arrives to "straighten everything out." Dahlmann struts around looking like Telly Savalas on a manhunt; he shoots his cuffs once or twice.

I don't think I've ever seen a real cop do that. It made me blink. Well, why not?

The whole story is so balmy. Donald W. Dailey as sad Mr. Witherspoon, who "must be more formal with his patients," looks suitably homeless and wan and seems to deserve the elderberry wine he gets at the finale.

I loved Dailey's brief appearance as Mr. Gibbs, the truly homeless man the suspicious, fractious, lonely, mean fellow who is run out of the house by Mortimer before his merciful aunts can serve up their wine. Dailey deserves bigger parts.

Meadow Brook Theatre is located in Wilson Hall at Oakland University in Rochester.

Emotional play holds attention

By BARBARA MICHALS

review

Supercharged emotions prevail in "The Runner Stumbles" when a young priest falls in love with a nun and later stands trial for their murder. As currently presented by the Farmington Players, the Milan Stitt drama is well-acted and engrossing.

Further performances are scheduled for 8:30 p.m. Friday-Sunday evenings and Feb. 12-15, 19-21 at the Farmington Players' Barn Theater.

Based on a true story, "The Runner Stumbles" takes place in 1911 in Solon, Mi., a remote small town in the Upper

Peninsula that is openly hostile to Catholics.

Father Rivard (Dale Feldpausch) has been sent to this small quiet parish to finish the book he is writing. The move also was made to remove the eager young priest from being a thorn in the side of his superiors.

SISTER RITA (Yvonne Golomb) is the young nun assigned to assist Father

Rivard when his two teaching nuns become ill. Right from the start there is electricity between the two as they clash on religious doctrine and their preceptions of their duties. Mrs. Shandig (Kathleen Monticello), Rivard's young, this is his first real courtroom case, and his homespun good sense and low-key approach are immensely appealing.

In smaller roles, Phil Hadley as the country bumpkin Amos and Deb Kember as the jealous schoolgirl Louise seem well-cast. That is not the case with Doug Buckley as the prosecutor and Bob McKeever as Monsignor Nicholson; both are rather wooden.

Despite the generally good performance director John Powers has elicited from his cast, the pacing in "The Runner Stumbles" is distressingly lead-footed, especially in the first act. The main problem is the many flashbacks required as Father Rivard tells his story.

A solution to the many slow scene shifts would be to have both past and present on stage simultaneously, letting the spotlight shift the action. The small stage might be a bit cramped, but the play would flow smoother and the emotional tension would be better sustained.

'Dear Ruth' presented at Greenfield Village

Kids Cabaret

TV personality Nova will be the starring performer in Kids Cabaret every Saturday and Sunday, beginning Feb. 21-22, at Stafford's Restaurant, Maple and Orchard Lake roads, Orchard Mall, West Bloomfield. Two shows daily will be at 2 and 3 p.m. Nova offers magic, ventriloquism and audience participation. The admission charge includes lunch. For more information call 851-8952 or 356-8525.

Long-distance romance by mail, a common experience during World War II, is the theme of the comedy hit "Dear Ruth," opening Friday at Henry Ford Museum Theater in Greenfield Village. Dearborn.

The Greenfield Village Players will

perform "Dear Ruth" at 8:30 p.m. Friday-Saturdays through March 14. Tickets are \$4.25 a person.

Dinner theater, which includes dinner at Heritage Hall with a performance of the play, costs \$18.25 a person. Reservations are necessary for the dinner theater.

For more information call 271-1620, ext. 414.

In "Dear Ruth," 15-year-old Miriam Wilkins helps the war effort by sending romantic letters to a gunner in Italy. She signs her letters with her sister's name, Sister Ruth, is an attractive and sophisticated 22-year-old, engaged to marry a bank executive.

comes home to claim his "love" before going to the Pacific, the troubles begin. Ruth doesn't want to hurt the handsome and boisterous lieutenant, so she plays along. Meanwhile, her boyfriend fumes with jealousy.

"Dear Ruth" by Norman Krasna was a smash hit on Broadway in 1944 and was made into a successful motion picture. It combines romance, comedy and nostalgic reminders of the 1940s.

WHEN GUNNER Bill Seawright

COUPON

The Ginger Man Restaurant
6838 Telegraph at 15 Mile. 855-3313

20% OFF ANY COMPLETE DINNER

Excluding sandwiches & beverages. Limit 1 coupon per table.

Valid Mon-Sun 4:30 PM. Exp. Feb. 12

10% Senior Citizen Discount

Open: Mon-Thurs 8am-10pm; Fri & Sat 8am-12 Mid.

BAR-B-Q RIBS & CHICKEN

UA theatres

U.S. CARDS REQUIRED WHERE APPLICABLE

MOVIES PRUDENTIAL TOWN CENTER
BOX OFFICE OPEN 30 MIN. PRIOR TO SHOWTIME

| | |
|-------|---------------------|
| 1 | 2 |
| "9-5" | "CHANGE OF SEASONS" |
| 12:30 | 1:00 |
| 2:45 | 3:00 |
| 5:00 | 5:15 |
| 7:15 | 7:30 |
| 9:45 | 9:45 |

Call 353-5657 for update of show and times.

SOMERSET INN
1515 E. 15th Ave. (at 15 Mile) 855-3313

TRIBUTE
JACK LEMMON, BOBBY BENSON, LEE REMICK
DAILY 1:15-3:30, 5:30-7:30, 9:30-11:30

\$200 MONDAY-THURSDAY AFTER 6 PM

9 to 5
JANE FONDA, LILY TOMLIN, COLLEEN PARSONS
DAILY 1:15-3:30, 5:30-7:30, 9:30-11:30

PONTIAC MALL
1515 E. 15th Ave. (at 15 Mile) 855-3313

STARTS FEB. 5
PAUL NEWMAN, EDWARD ASNER
DAILY 1:15-3:30, 5:30-7:30, 9:30-11:30

\$200 MONDAY-THURSDAY AFTER 6 PM

GENE WILDER and RICHARD PATTY
DAILY 1:15-3:30, 5:30-7:30, 9:30-11:30

STIR CRAZY

GENERAL CINEMA THEATRES

OPEN FOR YOUR ENJOYMENT
ANOTHER FINE NICHOLAS GEORGE THEATRE
— "a return to elegance!" —

Int Americana West
WEST BLOOMFIELD TOWNSHIP 626-4084
ON ORCHARD LAKE ROAD, S. OF MAPLE (15 MILE RD.)

4 LUXURIOUS AUDITORIUMS...4 GREAT ATTRACTIONS!

WINDWALKER PG
ANY WHICH WAY YOU CAN Clint Eastwood
9-5 Jane Fonda PG
STIR CRAZY Gene Wilder and Richard Pryor R

Special evening bargain price Mon. thru Thurs. Admission \$2.50. Wednesday bargain matinee all seats \$1.50. Saturday & Sunday bargain matinee first two shows \$1.50.

Kingsley Inn
HOTEL

Would like the pleasure of hosting your next banquet or party. Call us today. Our experienced staff, headed by Mr. Thomas and Mr. Petrides, will personally oversee all arrangements and details.

Woodward and Long Lake Road
Bloomfield Hills
644-1400

MARVIN'S
NEW YORK DELI

Is Now Open Sunday, 4 pm.-10 pm.

Family Tavern
Best Salad Bar in the City
Pizza • Overstuffed Deli Sandwiches
Homemade Soups • Pastries
Six Draught Beers

Kiddies Menu 99¢
includes **FREE POP**

on Telegraph Rd. - just N. of 12 Mile
(next to Jacques)
642-2430
Major Credit Cards

CARLOS MURPHY'S
MEXICAN CAFE

28244 Northwestern Hwy.
One block north of 15 Mile on Northwestern in Southfield
352-6330
Brunch Hours 11 A.M. - 3 P.M.

AFTER NINE ROOM
Cooper's Arms
306 Main Street, Rochester

Now Playing
BLACK / WHITE
COFFEE / COFFEE

1960's REVUE
THE BEATLES - GORDON LIGHTFOOT - PAUL SIMON
JOHN MITCHELL and others

An All New
Cabaret Entertainment
Fine Food and Liquors
Great Music and Songs
RESERVATIONS: 651-2266

The fresh flown Friday Fish Feast

All the lobster and other seafood delicacies you can eat. Friday evenings at the Haymarket.

Reservations required
\$19.95, all ages.

Troy Hilton Inn
Haymarket Road at Stephenson Hwy.
Call (313) 583-9000.

Karl's Beef Buffet
(formerly Monahan's)

15% OFF
ALL LUNCHEONS & DINNERS
with this coupon only during February

Senior Citizens do not need coupon
675 E. Maple • 645-6188 • Daily 11 AM-8 PM

\$2.00 MONDAY THRU THURSDAY
ALL EVENING PERFORMANCES

SHOWCASE CINEMAS

STERLING HEIGHTS:
35100 VAN DYKE RD. AT 15 MILE RD. STERLING HEIGHTS
BARGAIN MATINEE DAILY \$1.50 - FIRST SHOW ONLY 9:30-11:00

2400 SOUTH TELEGRAPH RD. PONTIAC BARGAIN MATINEE DAILY \$1.50 - FIRST SHOW ONLY 3:30-5:45

NO PASSES
SEEMS LIKE OLD TIMES PG
PONTIAC STERLING HTS.

ANY WHICH WAY YOU CAN PG
PONTIAC STERLING HTS.

STIR CRAZY R NO PASSES
STERLING HTS.

9 TO 5 PG
PONTIAC STERLING HTS.

SCANNERS R
PONTIAC STERLING HTS.

TRIBUTE PG
PONTIAC STERLING HEIGHTS

INCREDIBLE SHRINKING WOMAN
STERLING HTS.

THE MIRROR CRACKED PG
STERLING HTS.

POPEYE PG
STERLING HTS.

PRIVATE EYES PG
STERLING HTS. PONTIAC