

Stiffness slows pace of Troy Players comedy

By Barbara Michals
special writer

Drop a pair of befuddled American tourists into an international incident behind the Iron Curtain, add an inept assistant left in charge of the American Embassy and stir in some choice one-liners.

The result is "Don't Drink the Water," a delightfully wacky Woody Allen comedy currently offered by the Troy Players. Performances continue at 8 p.m. Friday-Sunday at the Troy Community Center on Big Beaver Road.

Though the production moves along at a somewhat uneven pace and generally lacks polish, the laughs still come through strongly. The players are generally competent but at times a bit stiff.

Phillip Jakey and Julie Sibley are amusing as Walter and Marion Hollander, the New Jersey tourists who wandered into a restricted area with a camera and now find themselves pursued as spies.

Top acting plaudits go to Greg Shiemke as Father Drobney, the hapless priest who took sanctuary in the embassy six years ago and passes the time fumbling magic tricks. With his flowing locks and mischievous eyes, Shiemke's zany priest is very credible.

PHILLIP JAKEY and Julie Sibley are amusing as Walter and Marion Hollander, the New Jersey tourists who wandered into a restricted area with a camera and now find themselves pursued as spies.

Seeking refuge at the embassy, they

are horrified to learn they may be confined there indefinitely due to some complicated international events. Jakey starts awkwardly but soon warms to his role as the quintessential Ugly American tourist. As outspoken as his loud sport shirt, he complains constantly about everything European and even manages to insult a visiting Arab potentate.

Ms. Sibley does a fine job with facial expressions, particularly wide-eyed wonderment at her predicament and patient resignation to her husband's foibles. The archetypal American housewife, Marion is soon cleaning the embassy and ironing in the ambassador's office.

As Susan, the Hollanders' marriageable young daughter, Debi LaCroix is badly miscast. Though attractive and bubbly, she is too mature for the ingenu role, making her whole characterization unbelievable.

LARRY GUNSBURG is generally pleasing as Arel Magee, the American ambassador's clumsy son, who has botched up every one of his many Foreign Service assignments. Given one last chance to redeem himself, Magee comes pretty close to blowing it again. The ineffectual Magee is the typical Woody Allen anti-hero, the little guy

review

who is a born loser. Instead of a bespectacled Woody Allen-type runt, GUNSBURG appears rather suave, making his bungling that much funnier. GUNSBURG's performance is uneven, though, at times his delivery is excellent, at other times stiff or poorly timed.

Bill Bolle is good as Kilroy, the am-

bassador's dryly competent assistant, who must try to straighten out the mess Magee gets the embassy into. John Lambert is a convincingly pompous ambassador. Earle Chalfant's Krojack has about as much charisma as one would expect from a top-secret police official — none — and his accent is passable.

In a small role, Michael Boshnakian gets laughs as the embassy chef much put upon by the Hollanders.

Director Connie Patrick and her cast offer a "Don't Drink the Water" that is a bit flawed but good fun nevertheless.

W. Bloomfield's Tatum plays 2 shows

Greg Tatum of West Bloomfield is featured in two Theatre of the Arts Ltd. (TAP) productions.

Tatum plays a frustrated bookstore clerk/would-be author who meets a most unusual lady of the evening in the comedy "Owl and the Pussycat," playing Saturday night in dinner theater at

the Wine Tasters in Sterling Heights. He also is featured as the bridegroom in the musical "I Do I Do" at Roberto's in Berkley on Sunday evenings.

Producer Michael J. Klier, also of West Bloomfield, said, "Greg's varied talents have allowed us to feature him


in a wide range of roles." Tatum has worked with the theater for more than six years.

Reservations for both shows can be made by calling 288-9450 from noon to 5 p.m. weekdays or noon to 4 p.m. Saturdays.

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