

Thursday, April 29, 1992 O&E

Farmington Hills resident starring in 'Golden Boy'

The punch of the prize-fighting ring awaits theatergoers to Will-O-Way Repertory Company's production of "Golden Boy."

Performances continue at 8:30 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays through May 29 at the theater, 775 W. Long Lake Road, Bloomfield Township. Tickets are \$6. For reservations and theater party bookings call 644-4418.

"Golden Boy" is under the direction of Celia Merrill Turner. A rhythmic musical in the contemporary mode, "Golden Boy" was written by William Gibson and Clifford Odets. Music and lyrics are by Charles Strouse and Lee Adams.

The story features Joe Wellington as the Golden Boy. The Harlem lad strives to put the ghetto behind him and rise from insult to fame in the brutal world of the white man. His route to success takes the audience through the rhythmic battle of the boxing arena.

EN ROUTE to a championship, Joe makes the mistake of falling in love with Lorna Moon, his manager's girlfriend. He learns only too late that she still loves the manager. Emotions of guilt and love create powerful interaction.

Troy Burgess, 19, of Farmington Hills, plays Joe, a part originally created by Sammy Davis. A recent graduate of North Farmington High School, Burgess has to his credit performances in the Michigan Opera Theatre's production of "Porgy and Bess."

He also has toured Australia, Spain and Africa as a tenor soloist with the semi-professional chorus, Musical Youth International.

Playing opposite Burgess is Gregory Edward Gray, a professional actor and guest artist on the Will-O-Way stage. Gray performs as Eddie Satin, the "big guy" in town who seeks to purchase the Golden Boy's contract.

Gray most recently was an actor and director with the Kalamazoo Civic Players. He has performed in and directed such productions as "The Great White Hope" and "Raisin."

A native of Detroit and graduate of Cass Technical High School, he studied theater at Michigan State University and St. Stephens College in Los Angeles where he was awarded a master of fine arts degree in drama.

Several other area residents have been cast in the play. Gene Connolly of Bloomfield Township will portray Fop-

pa Wellington.

Linda Louise Dierkes of Birmingham, Jan Franklin of Farmington Hills, Miriam Garon of Southfield and Linda Nelson of Troy all are members of the show's singing and dancing chorus.

Michelle Levine of Southfield is the choreographer.

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review

Uneven balance mars Simon play

Performances of the Meadow Brook Theatre production of Neil Simon's "Chapter Two" continue through May 16 on the Oakland University campus near Rochester. Curtain time is 8:30 p.m. Tuesdays-Fridays, 6 and 9:30 p.m. Saturdays, 6:30 p.m. Sundays and 2 p.m. Wednesdays. For tickets call the box office after noon at 377-3300.

By Helen Zucker
special writer

Meadow Brook Theatre's production of Neil Simon's weirdest play, "Chapter Two," is well done.

The play, directed by Charles Nolte, walks an uneasy tightrope between flippancy and real despondency, and the cast carefully follows the uneasy line of the script — shooting out Simon's inevitably funny one-liners, then falling back into a sad limbo.

The result is a curious combination of easy laughs at situations that aren't really funny and fits of blue funk eddying offstage and floating about in the theater.

"Chapter Two" deals with the laying away of ghosts. Despite the clever lines, the beginning, middle and end all suggest we can't really lay the dead to rest. The best we can do is muddle through and get on with new relationships.

IT'S A SOMBER play, an unresolved play, and nothing can hide that fact. The play lacks true comic lunacy. Simon, writing from autobiographical material in "Chapter Two," is too close to the bone to get out on a comic limb, to create the truly amusing minor characters that turn up in his other works.

Paul Vincent, nonetheless, gives the best performance of the evening in the hardest role. As George Schneider, the writer who's lost his

beloved, idealized wife of 12 years, Vincent starts slowly but gets going as the play proceeds.

Vincent has a way of carefully enunciating his words, almost as if he were testing them to see if words still exist after grief has taken its toll. This works in his favor, adding depth to a part Vincent could've breezed through.

Vincent tilts the weight of his role toward the confused, bereaved male who has to start dating again (his brother won't let him wilt), rather than toward the eternally witty man who's never at a loss for words.

We believe Vincent's momentary cruelty toward his new wife, and we also believe in his basic good will and understand why he seems to have his best rapport with his new love over the phone.

FRAN BRILL, as Jennie Malone, the woman who becomes Schneider's wife, is also at her best on the phone. Brill is a bit stiff, and I had no trouble believing in her as a "perfectionist who needs order." I had trouble believing in her as a "wonderfully warm, spontaneous, creative person."

Brill has good timing, looks intelligent and turns in a competent performance. She needs some voltage.

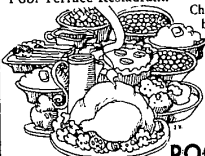
David Regal as Leo, George's philandering brother, turns in an energetic performance. Leo is an odd character. He doesn't love anyone but George and his wife Marilyn "in his fashion." He enjoys "dispassionate passion" — affairs with anyone available.

Regal manages to exude a crude sense of caring for a brother he doesn't understand. Leo idealizes his brother, rather in the way George idealizes his dead wife, giving all three characters a slight air of unreality.

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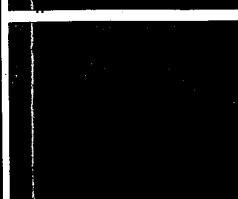
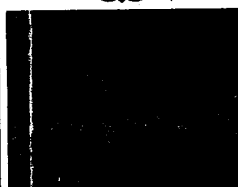
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