

Zany family makes funny show

The Will-O-Way Repertory Theatre production of "You Can't Take It With You" continues through Saturday, Nov. 29, in Birmingham. For ticket information, call 644-4418.

Money can't buy happiness. So say the zany characters in "You Can't Take It With You," the comedy classic playfully presented by Will-O-Way Repertory Theatre.

The Sycamore family members are unique individuals, each contentedly pursuing his or her own vision of happiness with little regard for what the rest of the world might think.

With a silly grin and boundless energy, Lisa Andrews nicely depicts madcap daughter Essie, who practices ballet — badly — and makes candy that husband Ed, ably performed by Jeff Vitachero, delivers to customers when he isn't playing the xylophone or cranking out strange messages on his printing

press.

Dike Dwelley's sonorous voice and deliberate enunciation give weight to his wisdom, as Grandpa, who quit the business world cold one day and has spent the last 35 years attending college commencements and catching snakes.

DEE DEE Addison is a perky, convincing Alice Sycamore, the daughter who, for some inexplicable reason, went to work in a Wall Street office, where she fell in love with Tony Kirby (Lou Jaros), the boss's son. Jaros is likeable as Tony, who quickly understands that the Sycamores have a lot more going for them than money can buy.

Trying to justify her family's peculiarities to the very popular Kirbys proves Alice's undoing. She loves her eccentric family too much to let the Kirbys disdain them.

Most other performances are fine, including Dee Dwelley as Penelope who writes unfinished plays because



Barbara Michals

a typewriter was delivered by mistake eight years ago; Carl Fluke as husband Paul, who tinkers with fire-works in the basement, and Phil Pugsley as Mr. DePinna, the iceman who made a delivery there many years ago and just stayed on.

George Hahn and Shirley Brewer are quite believable as Tony's parents, stodgy but not overly snooty. Jim Ennis does a funny bit as the outraged IRS man confronting Grandpa, who adamantly refuses to pay taxes.

C.J. Nodus is amusing as the outspoken Boris Kolenkhov, Essie's Russian ballet teacher, and Ellen

Weiss adds a touch of class as the down-at-heel Grand Duchess Olga. Under director Celia Merrill Turner, pacing slows occasionally, not always capturing the whirligig nature of life with the Sycamores. The spartan set is indeed appropriate for a family that shuns materialistic values.

Barbara Michals teaches high school English and journalism in Southfield. A theater critic for the last 12 years, she is an inveterate player who regularly catches up on all the New York productions.

Happy journey

Kate Bernard of Livonia (left), Maureen Pickens of Farmington, Jesse Haind of Farmington Hills and Robert Rhone of Redford portray the Kirby family in the new Unity Theatre Company's production of "The Happy Journey to Trenton and Camden." For more information, see the upcoming calendar in the Entertainment pages.

Comedy 'Alone Together' needs more momentum

Performances of "Alone Together," presented by the Avon Players, continue through Saturday, Nov. 22, at the playhouse in Rochester Hills. For ticket information, call 739-4600.

The Avon Players production of "Alone Together," a contemporary comedy, is low-key and spotted with a lack of enthusiasm.

The staging has merit in that it

does define playwright Lawrence Roman's scathing indictment of the new breed, "me first" generation. The comic rendering projects insight into one more facet of the overworked generation gap theme.

Basically, the Butlers, George and Helene, rejoice when the last of their three grown sons leaves the nest. Long earned and long overdue peace and privacy is promised. Predictably the rejoicing is short-lived as

each sons returns.

Each junior Butler is a walking product of the '60s, a self-centered, non-conforming individual, without consideration for his parents' sensitivity.

The clashing of the two value systems, traditional and upstart, endows the comedy with complex touches and in turn becomes a timely social commentary.

As a whole, the production conveys the play's statement. It is rather a simple one to make, although Jim Warner's direction allows the players to plod through a languishing first act before gathering momentum for a commendable, well-charged second act.

Sue Warner as Helene, the harassed mother, carries the entire production. She displays a strong flair for



Frank Hursley

comedy and is vocally effective when the homestead is invaded.

Robert W. Schultz projects a laid-back senior Butler. However, he comes through for some second-act sparks when George's patience thins.

The three sons are Keith (Joe Cuna), Michael (Chris Parker) and Elliott (E.J. Nolan). Each in his own way unwittingly monopolizes the Butler household. The trio of performers, listless at times, manages to create a churlish atmosphere. Janie Johnson, a young female

who is another uninhibited product of the new wave, also invades the premises. For a touch of originality, she is a forerunner in a movement advocating celibacy. Stephanie Gail Victor gives some amusing dimensions to her Janie.

Bill MacNeill designed a well-detailed set depicting the Butler residence.

Frank Hursley of Birmingham, a sales engineer by profession, is a longtime theater buff.

'Oliver!' suffers from cast with colds

The Troy Players production of "Oliver!" continues through Sunday, Nov. 23, at the Troy Community Center. For more information, call 879-1285.

Lionel Bart's musical "Oliver!" based on Charles Dickens' expose of London's workhouses, gin mills, thieves and street life needs good dancers and good voices to come alive. Alas, the Troy Players production of "Oliver!" seemed to have a cast stricken with flu.

Directed by Connie Patrick, the cast tried to give its all, but Christopher Locke, who looked scary enough to play Bill Sikes, had laryngitis, and "Oliver!" without a scarilying Bill Sikes isn't an "Oliver!"

The workhouse children who dou-

bled as Fagin's boys sang in a high treble broken by hoarse notes. Kenny Grider as Oliver sang clearly and did a nice rendition of "Where Is Love?" Kenny and many of the children, especially the little girls doubling as boys, displayed spirit.

Deena Pearlman as Nancy easily stole every scene without trying. Her clear voice and ability to act transcended the production. Pearlman badly needed someone to act with, but plucky Brian Armbrust as the Artful Dodger was unintelligible and so was the hoarse Sikes.

STEPHEN KIERSEY got in some good moments as Fagin. Alone onstage, Kiersey gave an amusing rendition of that clever song, "I'm Reviewing the Situation."

Several people sitting near me



Helen Zucker

commented that they always enjoy the Troy Players' "smaller productions." I concur. In fact, I have seen several stunning plays done by this group — plays that use one good set, plays that make full use of the deep stage and don't call upon technical assets this theater doesn't have.

The 40 actors and the crew involved in "Oliver!" try their hardest to use their playhouse well, but

sometimes less is more. I wish a full recovery to everyone who gamely got up onstage with the flu — or even a cold.

Helen Zucker has many years of experience reviewing for newspapers and magazines in Michigan, New York and Massachusetts.

table talk

New Beaujolais

Hogan's Restaurant in Bloomfield Township will celebrate the arrival of Beaujolais Nouveau from 10 p.m. Wednesday to 2 a.m. Thursday. Because of strict French wine regulations, the wine cannot be served until midnight. A special menu, to complement the wine, also will be featured.

Wild game

A seven-course gourmet meal is scheduled for Monday, Nov. 24, at Hogan's in Bloomfield Township. Buffalo, wild boar, venison and other

autumn fare will be served at Wild Game Night. Tickets are \$35 per person. For reservations, call 626-1800.

For wine buffs

A shipment of Beaujolais Nouveau is destined for the 333 East in the Omni International at Millender Center in Detroit. The wine arrives at 12:30 a.m. Thursday, Nov. 20, when it will be rushed to the Omni. Available through December at the restaurant or at Tastings, the lobby bar, will be Gorges Du Boeuf at \$32.9 a glass or \$16.45 a bottle. A local wine being offered through De-

cember is L. Mawby Turkey Red from Michigan's Leelanau Peninsula at \$2.99 a glass or \$14.79 a bottle.

Special dinner

The Lark in West Bloomfield will hold a Back-East Dinner at 7 p.m. Monday-Tuesday, Nov. 24-25. Mary and Jim Lark, the restaurant's own-

ers, will offer their favorite dishes from other restaurants they visited recently. Honoring Le Cirque in New York City, there will be Fettuccini with Shaved Fresh White Truffle, and from the Robert Morris Inn in Oxford, Maryland, there will be Fresh Chesapeake Bay Blue Crab Cakes. For more information about the multicourse dinner, priced at \$60 per person, call 661-4466.

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