

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons' editor/644-1100



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Judy Pierson, the show's costumer, works on one of the black outfits during rehearsal.

For 'Nine' Costumes are black or white, or else colorful

By Ethel Simmons
staff writer

COSTUMING A LOCAL production of a lavish Broadway musical isn't easy. But the Theatre Guild of Livonia-Redford has gone all out, with its "big" costume budget of \$300, to recreate the fantasy of the show "Nine."

Judith Pierson, TGLR's executive director, is costumer for "Nine," which will have its Michigan premiere at 8 p.m. Friday at the guild playhouse, 15135 Beech Daly Road in Redford Township.

The engagement will continue at 8 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 14; Friday-Sunday, Feb. 20-22, and Friday-Sunday, Feb. 27-28 and March 1. For tickets at \$7 call 522-8057.

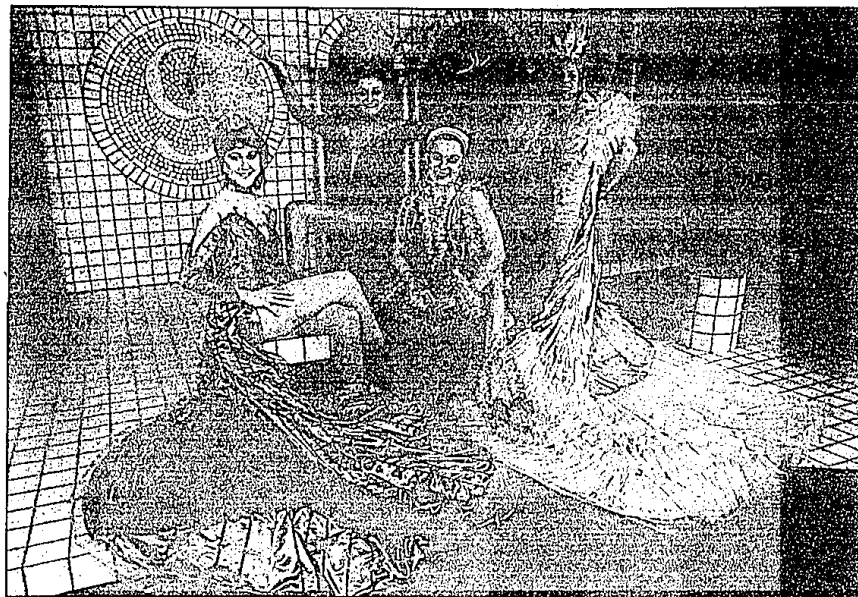
The Tony-Award-winning musical by Arthur Kopit and Maury Yeston is based on Federico Fellini's film, "Eight and a Half."

"It's basically autobiographical," Pierson said. "It's about the crisis in his career and the women in his life, in his memory or imagination."

The production features a cast of one man, three little boys and 15 women (the Broadway show originally had 21 women). During most of the show everyone is dressed in black, and later when the lead character, Italian movie director Guido Contini played by Warren Heinkecker, imagines he is dead, everyone except his wife, Luisa, who is real, wears white versions of their black clothes.

THERE'S ALSO an elaborate "Grand Canal" number in Venice, during a sequence on a film he imagines about Casanova. "Twelve of the 15 women are onstage in very showy, colorful costumes," Pierson said.

In the "Grand Canal" number, Lillane LaFleur (played by Elsie Rippe), who at one time was in the Fol-



Elaborate gowns created by the costume crew are worn by Lucinda Hawkins (left), Cynthia Botley of Canton, Nancy Delowsky of Livonia and Elsie Rippe, in the Theatre Guild of Livonia-Redford production of the musical "Nine." The show's flashiest

sequence is the "Grand Canal" number in Venice. Warren Heinkecker, who stars as Guido Contini, designed and executed all the detail on the mosaic set with number 9.

lies Bergere, changes out of a black suit to reveal a Folies Bergere costume, actually a bathing suit. "She does a number with a 24-foot-long black boa," Pierson said. "Because we couldn't afford real feathers, it's made out of black illusion net, made to look like feathers."

Other women in the number add ruffled skirts with sequin trim to their black wrap dresses.

Pierson saw "Nine" twice when it was on Broadway. "I liked it so much I saw it again," she said. Some of the costumes at TGLR are very similar to those worn in the Broadway production.

"We're trying for a similar style and effect. For the 'Grand Canal,' they used thousands of dollars of brocade. They have a huge stage," she said. The show locally is being done in the guild's small house, and things are scaled down.

She said a few of the costumes for the Grand Canal number were bor-

rowed — the number combines both period and showgirl costumes. "It's the most elaborate show I've ever worked on," Pierson said. "It's a big challenge to me. I'm scared to death. You're afraid you'll not get everything done."

WHILE MANY of the costumes are flashy, few are scanty. "Two of the costumes in the show might be perceived as revealing," she said. "The young lady Carla, Guido's mistress (played by Jacqueline Eastman), wears a black stretch lace body suit with long sleeves and legs covered up. She appears nude but has a flesh-colored garment underneath. She also wears a nun's habit and a white lace body suit patterned after the original."

The actress' father, John Eastman of Livonia, is producer. Eastman's wife, Gail Mack, is lighting designer. Director-choreographer is Jim Fossante. Musical director is Jack Pier-

son of Livonia.

For some of the earlier scenes, from the movie director's memory or imagination, there are slight changes in the women's black costumes. "Little bits are added to update them, and make them look like someone else — Germans visiting a spa, or Italian chambermaids."

"I think I'm overspending, a little bit," Pierson said. "We did a lot of bargain hunting. We searched for the dollar and a half fabric." Many of the costumes are trimmed with sequins, nailheads, beads and buttons.

"Some are made to look like embroidery work. It's actually done with Slick pens (found in artists' stores)," she said.

"ONE COSTUME is black with white embroidery. We used white Slick pens. We also used the pens on German bibs and suspenders." Among the many women who

worked on costumes for the show, Pierson gives special credit to Marcia Closson, Therese Duffy of Redford, Karen Lahiff of Westland, Ethel Wiedig and Barbara Havershaw.

In making the costumes, Pierson said, "Some of the things are quite simple. The abilities vary. I have some expert seamstresses. Others are busy gluing on sequins or turning up hems. One black suit and white suit made of vinyl looks like leather, and is difficult to sew."

In contrast to the women's costumes, clothes for the men presented no problem. Guido — "He is the easiest of all," Pierson said. "He wears a black shirt and pants throughout the show. He provided his own."

"His memory goes back to age 9. One of the three boys in the show is Guido at 9. He wears a black shirt and shorts throughout the show." And Louisa provided her own black dress.

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