



Barbara Michals

'Social Security' needs more zing

Performances of the Birmingham Village Players production of "Social Security" continue through Sunday. For ticket information call the box office at 644-2075.

By Barbara Michals
special writer

In the best tradition of "the show must go on," the Birmingham Village Players surmounted formidable obstacles to open its 67th season with the comedy "Social Security." Unfortunately, the backstage renovations that hampered rehearsals left the players with a disappointingly flat production.

"Social Security" has an amusing plot but, being light on witty repartee, it relies heavily on stylish delivery for its laughs. Under director John Reddy, the cast seems promising, but under-rehearsed. Line difficulties plagued Sunday's performance, and comic timing never quite hit the mark.

Bob Overmyer and Sharon Radom appear very well cast as David and Barbara Kahn, a chic, sophisticated Manhattan couple who run an art gallery and live the good life on the Upper East Side. Their world goes askew when Barbara's eccentric, demanding old mother is virtually dumped on their doorstep.

David should be droll and flippancy; Barbara should dissolve into a quivering heap of nerves. Both Overmyer and Radom remain too calm, handling the situation with good grace does not produce laughs.

WHEN A HARRASSED Barbara glumly states, "Ask not for whom the walrus thumps," it would be much funnier a few seconds and sev-

Helen Parrish does an admirable job as Sophie Greengrass, Barbara's formidable mother.

eral thumps later, when the full impact of those thumps has time to set in.

Helen Parrish does an admirable job as Sophie Greengrass, Barbara's formidable mother. She is most convincing as the revitalized Sophie, the warm and vibrant senior citizen who blossoms out from under the frumpy housecoat when given the right incentive. Parrish uses some effective facial expressions as the grumpy old Sophie, but the character's full laugh potential is never realized.

Up to now Sophie had been living with her other daughter, Trudy, and son-in-law Martin, stodgy suburbanites. Joan Knauer's Trudy is dominating, stingy and overprotective but never quite coalesces into a distinct comic persona. As Martin, Jerry McKee nicely captures the meek accountant's buttoned-down mind.

Phil Whelan is pleasing as the aged Maurice Koenig, the world-famous artist whose jaunty demeanor helps tap Sophie's hidden reservoirs. "Social Security" is a funny, warm-hearted play. The Birmingham production needs some polishing to bring it up to the group's usual high standards.

Barbara Michals teaches high school English in Southfield. A theater critic for the last 15 years, she is an inveterate playgoer who regularly catches up on all the New York productions.

upcoming things to do

Deadline for the Upcoming calendar is one week ahead of publication. Items must be received by Thursday to be considered for publication the following Thursday. Send to: Ethel Simmons, Entertainment Editor, the Observer & Eccentric, 36251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia 48150.

● OPENS SEASON

Meadow Brook Theatre will open its 24th season with a new version of Alexander Ostrovsky's comedy classic "The Diary of a Scoundrel." The play starts a four-week run at 8 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 5, on the campus of Oakland University in Rochester Hills. Meadow Brook's production is an adaptation by Erik Brogger that Berkeley Repertory Theatre commissioned and premiered in 1986. Tickets may be reserved by calling 377-3300.

● IN CONCERT

Smith Theatre will present "The Raven Homecoming Concert" on the Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills. Josh White Jr., Anne Hills and Michael Smith will perform together at 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, Oct. 13-14. An optional dinner package will be available Oct. 13 for \$24. Dinner reservations must be paid for one week in advance. Tickets for the performances are \$12 in advance (reservations made 48 hours before) and \$15 at the door. For reservations, contact 471-7700.

● 'MISTER ROBERTS'

Dan Roth of Southfield, Jon Liebertrau, Kim Fox and Jim Killeen of Birmingham, and Todd J. Hoffman, David Silberman and Darrell Stokes, all of West Bloomfield, are appearing in "Mister Roberts" at the Bonstelle Theatre for two weekends starting Friday, Oct. 6. Performances are at 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, Oct. 6-7 and 13-14, and 2 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 8 and 15. Ticket information may be obtained by calling the box office in Detroit at 577-2960.

● TOWN HALL

Tickets are on sale for Pontiac-Oakland Town Hall for the 1989-90

Series. The series consists of five lectures the second Wednesday of the month, during October, November, January, February and March, beginning at 10:30 a.m. at Roma's of Bloomfield in Township. Celebrities scheduled to speak are David Eisenhower, "Eisenhower: At War," Robert F. Kennedy Jr., "Our Environmental Destiny," Pamela Eldred — "The Changing Face of Beauty," Dwayne X. Riley — "Riley's World (Behind the Scenes)," and Joan Benoit — "Growing Up in Hollywood." Tickets may be obtained by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope and check for \$37.50 to Pontiac-Oakland Town Hall, P.O. Box 1889, Pontiac 48056. For more information, call 673-8266. Celebrity luncheons, limited to season-ticket holders, follow the lectures. Call 698-1490 for luncheon information.

● ADULT COMEDY

Novi Players will perform "Move Over, Mrs. Markham," an adult comedy farce, at the Novi Civic Center. Area residents with leading roles are Tom Artushin and Nancy Keough of Birmingham as Mr. and Mrs. Markham. Performances are at 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, Oct. 13-14 and 20-21, with a matinee at 1 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 15. For information, call 348-2181.

● AUTUMN FEST

The annual Autumn Fest continues 1-5 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, Oct. 7-8, at Cranbrook Institute of Science in Bloomfield Hills. Visitors are being encouraged to bring their own apples and a plastic jug and try their hands at pressing their own apple for home-made apple cider on the hand-operated antique press. (It takes about a half bushel of apples to make a gallon of cider.) Meanwhile, at the Nature Place, volunteers will demonstrate honey extraction and visitors may join the effort and taste the nectar. Two observation hives will permit close-up viewing of bees at work. Beekeepers will disseminate an outdoor hive to give visitors a rare look inside. For more information, call 645-3230.



Jared Hoffer of Southfield is the Lion, P.J. Powers of Southfield is the Tin Man, Kelly Bocek of Huntington Woods is Dorothy and Eddie Sugarman of Southfield is the Scarecrow in the Peanut Butter Players production of "The Wizard of Oz." Performances are at Peanut Butter Players' new location, the historic Players Club in Detroit. For ticket information, call 558-6 "PVP" between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.

● READERS THEATER

Second performance of the Fall Series of Readers Theater will be held at 4 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 29, in Shiffman Hall at the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield. A complimentary wine bar will open at 3:15 p.m. Tickets are available at the door beginning at 3 p.m. the day of the performance. There is an admission charge. For further information, call Readers Theater at 967-4030.

● FAMILY SHOWS

Two family performances will be

held at the Community Center Farmington-Farmington Hills in October. Sounds of "A Little Knight Music" will fill the autumn air at the center Thursday, Oct. 12. The "Chautauqua Express" will pull into the historic facility Wednesday, Oct. 25. Showtime for both performances is 7 p.m. Dessert will be served following each show. Ticket price is \$4 per person or \$12 per family. For tickets, call the community center at 477-8404.

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