

Meadow Brook blunts quick witted Scoundrel

By Mark S. Carley
special writer

Oakland University's Meadow Brook Theatre opens its 1989-90 season with a light, funny and rather tame production of Alexander Ostrovsky's "The Diary of a Scoundrel." Ostrovsky (considered the father of Russian theater) wrote this savagely satiric comedy in 1868, but the characters he lampoons are timeless.

In fact, the script is extremely well suited to today's audiences due to a modern adaptation by playwright Erik Brøgger. No danger here of being lulled to sleep by turgid Russian dialogue. The pace is quick and the exchanges witty.

The scoundrel of the title is Egor Dmitrich Glumov, an ambitious young bachelor seeking his fortune via the abundant dowry of an unsuspecting young countess. In his quest he resorts to flattery, deceit, trickery and slander. In characteristic bravado, he chronicles his misdeeds in a diary. This ultimately

leads to his downfall.

Paul DeBoy plays Glumov with enthusiasm and great skill. Because Glumov is a different character to each of his victims, the part requires an actor with both range and subtlety. To his pompous uncle, Glumov is a devoted half wit; to his flirtatious aunt, a shy admirer; to the aristocratic public official, a worldly sophisticated. DeBoy moves smoothly from one character to the next, always managing to retain a certain reptilian charm which endears him to the audience in a perverted sort of way.

Laughs abound as Glumov manipulates each of his foolish, egotistical marks. The loveable buffoons of the supporting cast add a richness to the humor of the production.

Joseph Reed, as the pompous and glib Uncle Mameva, is jolly and endearing. His sexually frustrated wife, Kleopatra, is played with bawdy lust by Patti Perkins. Especially noteworthy for his comedic contributions is Phil Locker, whose rich baritone voice and keen sense of

review

the absurd make him a hilarious treat as the dobering old fool, General Krutitsky. Anita Barone, one of the Hillberry's brightest stars for the past three years, also does a fine job in her Meadow Brook debut as Mashenka, the object of Glumov's desires.

Terence Kilburn's direction is aimed directly at the funny bone, and unfortunately seems calculated not to offend. While the play is lots of fun, it lacks the bite of vicious satire which I think was originally intended. Like a good production of Moliere's "Tartuffe," "Scoundrel" should leave the audience laughing, but also a little uncomfortable about their own pretensions and vanities.

THE MEADOW BROOK production, which features caricatures

rather than characters, relieves the audience of any guilt and leaves an amusing but unmemorable piece of work.

As usual, Meadow Brook has done an outstanding job with sets and costumes. With the aid of a revolving stage, scenes move flawlessly from ramshackle apartment to sumptuous mansion to country estate, etc. Costumes are colorful, detailed and well made.

Oh balance, "Diary of a Scoundrel" provides a delightful evening of laughter. However, Ostrovsky's work does suffer from the Meadow Brook penchant for homogenizing its productions to please the broadest possible audience.

"Diary of a Scoundrel" continues through Sunday, Oct. 29, at Meadow Brook Theatre on the campus of Oakland University, Rochester. For ticket information and curtain times, call the theater box office, 377-3300.



Jeanne Arnold and Paul DeBoy play Glafira Glumova and her scheming nephew Egor Glumov in Meadow Brook Theatre's production of "Diary of a Scoundrel."

Loesser tribute flawed fun

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set that seriously constricts the show's action. A musical set should

stay out of the performer's way. This one clearly hinders movement. Its steely-cold look also fails to create a

showcase for the music.

Another handicap is the three-piece orchestra which, although competent, is too small and too soft. The overture was played at a volume more suitable for dinner music.

Although it is often uneven and less than fully satisfying, Avon Players' production of "Perfectly Frank" does provide several excellent moments. If you're a fan of Frank Loesser's big hits and want to know what the rest of his stuff sounds like, check it out.

"Perfectly Frank" continues Oct. 12-15, 10-11 at the Avon Players Theatre. For show times and ticket information, call the box office, 375-1300.

Writer examines retirement

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said, "I had received threats before, all teachers do in Detroit, but this kid had a wild look in his eye and I was close to retirement — so I said, 'I'm through, I'm out of here.'"

"New Africa High: a low comedy" came out as a movie, "Rebel High" and was distributed internationally in 1986.

"It wasn't the worst movie you could see but it really wasn't very

good, either," he said. "They changed the story to sort of a teen-rival-gang-in-school flick that had nothing to do with the book or the teachers hanging on in Detroit."

In 1979 Keliher published another book that endeared him to many — "Detroit: Rebirth or Miscegenation" and in 1982 another satire entitled "The Immoral Majority."

Born and raised in Highland Park and one of 10 children, Keliher dropped out of school at 16 to join

the Marines and begin the life-trek that now has him poised on the brink of literary success.

After "Sandwiched Light" runs, Keliher heads for San Diego to be closer to the writing scene in Hollywood.

Performance dates for "Sandwiched Light" are at 8 p.m. Fridays, Saturdays, Oct. 13-14, 20-21, 27-28. A Sunday matinee performance is set for 2 p.m. Oct. 22. Tickets are \$7 and can be obtained by calling, 532-4010.

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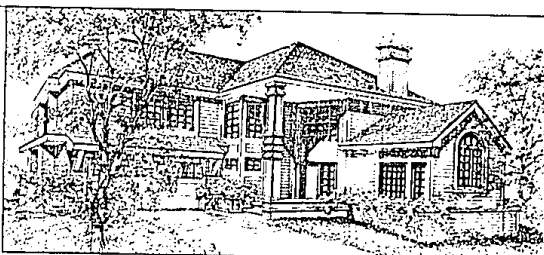
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