

St. Dunstan's battles against unfunny script

Performances of "The Secret Affairs of Mildred Wilde" continue through Saturday, Feb. 24, at St. Dunstan's Guild of Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills. Tickets are \$8 for adults, \$5 for students under 18. For more information call 434-0327.

By Barbara Michele
Staff writer

Despite a hard-working cast and a few hilarious moments, "The Secret Affairs of Mildred Wilde," current production by St. Dunstan's Guild of Cranbrook, just isn't very funny most of the time.

The comedy by Paul Zindel is reminiscent of both "The Life of Walter Mitty" and "Play It Again, Sam," but lacks the wit of either.

Mildred Wilde (Nina Kirchoff) is a frumpy, lazy New York housewife whose sole interest is watching old Hollywood movies on television at rival houses. Her bedroom walls are lined with stacks of old movie magazines, and she claims that the film stars speak to her and give her advice. Whenever life takes an unpleasant turn — her pending eviction, her husband's apparent infidelity — Mildred fantasizes scenes from old movies.

Two of those fantasies, the ones from "Gone With the Wind" and "King Kong," are very funny. The others are only slightly more amusing than when Mildred isn't dreaming, and that's not much.

KIRCHER DOES a nice job of giving Mildred a whiny voice and a lachrymose attitude toward the real world, and she's convincing in her transformations into Scarlett O'Hara and a jungle cat. The rest of her fantasy characters are not that distinctly delineated. Her glamorous blond hair and full make-up do not really suit the frumpy Mildred and make her transformations even less effective.

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review

William Everson is believable as Mildred's patently mild-mannered husband Roy. His slow delivery is appropriate but, as with most of the show, comic timing is just a bit off.

The one real comic bright spot is the ever-reliable Tom Christopher. A neighbor of the Wildes and a fellow film fan, Christopher turns up at a supporting character in each of Mildred's fantasies. He is hilarious imitating Butterfly McQueen or dolled up as a '40s nightclub chorine. His comic delivery is impeccable.

Fran Hayes has a few good comic moments as the Wildes' amorous landlady, as do Joyce Marchese as Mildred's crabby sister-in-law and Kappy Pennington as a television personality. Lillian Hiltcheok is pleasing as the nun brought in to help Mildred. Unfortunately, the material doesn't give any of them a chance to excel for long.

The slow curtains are forgivable considering the many costume changes required, but director Melissa Makolet Butler needs to pick up the pace throughout. Technically the production has some very good special effects, including a spectacular replica of King Kong that garners the most applause.

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 & Reviewer, 30251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia 48150.

• Lady Soul

The Ann Arbor Summer Festival will present soul superstar Aretha Franklin for a rare concert appearance at the festival's second annual Winter Warm-Up at 8 p.m. Saturday, March 31, at Hill Auditorium. Franklin, a resident of Bloomfield Hills, seldom performs outside the Detroit area. She is known as "Queen of Soul" or "Lady Soul." Franklin's appearance follows last year's performance by jazz legend Ella Fitzgerald. Concert tickets go on sale Monday morning, Feb. 19, at all Ticketmaster outlets including Hudson and Harmony House locations. In Ann Arbor, tickets may be purchased at the Michigan Union ticket office or by calling 763-TKTS. The concert will be preceded by a "Preview Party," at which the festival's summer season will be announced. Proceeds from the party will benefit the festival. Benefit tickets, including the pre-concert party and choice concert seating, may be obtained from the festival office. Call 747-2278 for more information.

• In concert

Concert in the Afternoon features Joseph Kohnski, currently starring on Broadway in "Les Miserables," and television's "One Life to Live," with the Matt Michaels Quartet, the Grunyons and the Mercyairens at 3 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 25, at Mercy High School's auditorium in Farmington Hills. General admission, reserved, \$10; preferred seating, champagne reception, \$30. For ticket information call 476-8020; after 6 p.m., 476-8335. The concert will benefit the Rosemary Chumney Friendship Fund.

• "Blithe Spirit"

"Blithe Spirit," fanciful drama of wifely apparitions and a haunted husband, written by Noel Coward, will be performed by the Asolo State Theatre Company as the Michigan Theater's Drama Season 1990 continues at 8 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 17, in Ann Arbor. Tickets are available at the Michigan Theater box office. To order tickets by phone or for further information, call 668-8397 during box office hours.

• Second Rush

A second and final performance by Canadian rock group Rush has been added at 8 p.m. Friday, March 9, at the Palace of Auburn Hills. Rush's first concert is Thursday, March 8, with special guest Mr. Big opening both shows. Tickets for the second show at \$20 (reserved) are on sale at the box office and all Ticketmaster outlets. Tickets also may be charged by calling 645-6666. For more information, contact the box office at 377-8600.

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