

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor 644-1100



Thursday, May 3, 1990 O&E

(O/7)



Cathie Breidenbach

'Dracula' done in campy style

Performances of the Meadow Brook Theatre production of "Dracula" continue through Sunday, May 20. For ticket information call the box office at 377-3300.

Fog creeps ominously over the door sills, dogs howl and organ music sets the scene for melodrama in Meadow Brook Theatre's mystery-comedy, "Dracula."

The production, directed by Robert Spencer, goes for sophisticated camp and succeeds. High-tech special effects combine with the old-fashioned stagecraft to make fog creep, bats swoop and chairs move mysteriously. From the baronial splendor of Peter Hick's set to the voluptuous allure of Mina's silky gowns, the subtly self-conscious comedy enjoys its own flamboyant realism. Real dentists even provided the fangs for Count Dracula and for his innocent, blond victim, Mina.

The play, adapted by Charles Nolte from the 1897 novel by Bram Stoker, revives the vampire story about Count Dracula who supposedly descended from a real 15th-

century villain in Wallachia (near Transylvania). The script plays with puns and unabashed double entendre, but the cast delivers outrageous lines with a deft, comic touch on the dry side of melodrama. The play creates an English mystery based on ancient myths about nocturnal vampires who feast on the blood of the living.

Dracula, played with impeccably smooth manners by Tom Spackman, revitalizes a grand, eloquent concept of evil. Unlike the heavy accent made famous by the "The Count" of Sesame Street and others, Spackman plays Dracula without accent.

HE USES his commanding voice and his handsome, cool superiority to create a magnetic personification of the evil Count. When he flourishes his black cape and lights transform the satin lining to blood red, he is a villain of the grand old school.

The three good guys who conspire to save the beautiful Mina from the curse of the living dead

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Tom Spackman is Count Dracula and Sarah McCord Williams is Mina, the object of his affections, in "Dracula" at Meadow Brook Theatre.



Mary Jane Doerr

Co-stars spark St. Bede show

Performances of the St. Bede Players production of "The New Moon" continue through Sunday, May 6, at the Southfield-Lathrup High School Auditorium in Southfield. For ticket information, call 557-6527 or 557-7245.

Outstanding singing and worthy stage direction are two important reasons to see the St. Bede Players newest offering, "The New Moon," at Southfield Lathrup High School.

Star of the show Jacqueline Turri Bacus is a Marianne with a Jeanette MacDonald voice who superbly sings the show's hit tunes "Wanting You," "Lover Come Back to Me" and even a refrain of "Stouthearted Men." Besides being lovely, she is a good actress.

Her lover Robert (Thomas J. Murphy) is just as dynamic. His baritone voice did not cover the lower notes in the role but sally the upper ranges.

Last-minute replacement David Curtis (Philippe) of Ann Arbor is a marvelous addition to any production. He sang "Softly" with the kind of tender voice that left this reviewer wondering what other parts he has performed. He is a real find for any company.

ACTING CREDITS must go to the very agile Audrey A. Wilanowski, who was spectacular as Julie. She made the comic role lovable, with her continuous in-character gestures.

George Bloomfield (Duval) is always fun in his roles. He manages to carry off hilariously such silly routines as "Interrupted Love Song." Sigmund Romberg's 1928 operetta takes place in New Orleans in 1792. History buffs will know that as the year of the French Revolution, New Orleans was part of the French-owned Louisiana Territory.

Beaunoir and his daughter Marianne, with their ship the New Moon, are in New Orleans. Unknown to them, Robert Mission, their bond servant, has escaped from France. A very sneaky Ribaud, well portrayed

Jacqueline Turri Bacus is a Marianne with a Jeanette MacDonald voice who superbly sings the show's hit tunes "Wanting You," "Lover Come Back to Me" and even a refrain of "Stouthearted Men."

by Michael J. O'Neill, has come looking for him.

The romantic events take place at the Beaunoir home, on the deck of the New Moon, and on the Isle of Pines. The intrigue and mystery that develops makes a more plausible story than that of most absurd musical plots.

KATHI BUSH'S imaginative staging and choreography keeps the action constantly moving and is the reason for the success. It is innovative and natural, even though at times it seems more like G&S than Romberg.

Bush has gifted talent to work with in this show, exquisite costumes (designed by Jacqueline Turri Bacus), an appealing rocco set (designed by Thomas J. Murphy), in pastels that include a dramatic staircase. (The sofa is from the wrong period.)

For the most part, the stage direction is tight, despite lags which will disappear with each performance. But the show runs 3½ hours.

Bush and music director-conductor Joseph Gamahe could have cut selections of music and redundant routines, shortened the time and the show would have been magnificent. This outstanding group of actresses and singers is used to being on stage and projecting lines. In the Southfield-Lathrup High School auditorium, the cast's efforts prove fruitless except when they are singing. The important dialogue is comprehensible only in certain seats. Appropriately these trained voices are not "miked." Microphones are not the answer for trained voices.

Female 'Odd Couple' an amusing pair

Performances of the Farmington Players production of "The Odd Couple" (female version) continue through Saturday, May 19, at the Farmington Players Barn. For ticket information call the box office at 538-1670.

In Neil Simon's female version of "The Odd Couple," Felix and Oscar become Florence and Olive, and we see how this off-late tale of mismatched roommates works from a woman's perspective.

Gone is the Friday night poker

game with the boys, replaced by Trivial Pursuit with the girls. The giggly English Pidgeon sisters are now the charming Spanish Costazuela brothers.

You probably remember the story. Sloppy, casual Olive Madison (Mary Ann Tweedie) is recently divorced and lonely in her apartment. Fastidious and compulsive Florence Unger (Cynthia De Wolfe) is near suicide over her impending separation. Olive invites Flo to move in, and the rest is well-documented domestic mayhem.



Mark S. Carley

As Olive, Tweedie is loud and crude. De Wolfe is a very prim and proper Florence. The two develop a relationship which becomes more

convincing as hostilities grow. ONLY REAL PROBLEM with the show is that "The Odd Couple" sim-

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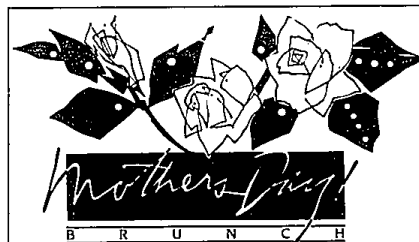
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