

Ridgedale Players entertain with classic ghost-mystery



Performances of the Ridgedale Players production of "The Unhatched" continue through May 17 at the playhouse in Troy. For ticket information, call 644-8329.

HELEN ZUCKER

The Ridgedale Players production of Tim Kelly's "The Unhatched" is a sheer fun. Directed by Gene Ewald and Donna Beckus, the play, based on Dorothy McCar-

olle's novel, has all the classic elements of the ghost-mystery genre. The cast and crew throw themselves into this mixture of Wilkie Collins, Edgar Allan Poe, Dorothy Sayers and Noel Coward, and wrest an evening of rousing entertainment from lines we can now count. (P.S. get that program says "The time is present." It is 1945 or earlier.)

The production stays true to Kelly's intention. Mysterious lights shine behind the slugs of empty rooms, freezing drafts envelop the new owners of a house, a veiled lady floats through the ruined garden, and

stops behind the French doors. Of course the house is called Cliff End, and two women have fallen or been pushed over the cliff. We get to find out what happened.

Yes, there was a movie version, and director Ewald has included the lovely Victor Herbert theme "Stella by Starlight." We are treated to a soft piano version whenever the innocent heroine, Stella Meredith, played by Christa Allesandrini, shows up. Allesandrini gives us a brave young woman bent on discovering the truth about her mother. Pluck pays off. Stella gets a man as well as the truth. Allesandrini somehow con-

vinces us that a fragile girl would not hesitate to sleep alone in a haunted house or rush to fund the cause of the strange weeping.

Julie Fuller does an excellent job as Pamela, the bright sister of writer Roddy Fitzgerald. Fuller's steady characterization and her excitement carry much of the play. Jim Bink is a very Roddy. Brother and sister contend with dry rot, ancient trunks, legends and an outspoken, frisky housekeeper. Lari Jacobs turns in a lively performance as devout Lizzie Flynn, the housekeeper on the lookout for the cat who

has wisely disappeared.

Hal Safran is fine as Commander Brooke, Stella's crabby grandfather. The things he believes are never quite explained, but someone has to be the original owner of Cliff End. The Commander, walking stiffly, and ordering everyone about is, in Safran's hands, the right person to sell the grand old house -- for a song -- to the Fitzgeralds.

Helen Zucker has many years' experience reviewing for newspapers and magazines in Michigan, New York and Massachusetts.

Fun never stops in stylish production of Neil Simon's 'Rumors'



Performances of the Birmingham Village Players production of "Rumors" continue through May 16 at the playhouse in Birmingham. For ticket information call the box office at 644-2075 anytime.

If laughter is the best medicine, Neil Simon's "Rumors" at the Bir-

mingham Village Playhouse is like a miracle drug. The fun never stops in this classic farce, enhanced by Simon's usual witty repartee and the stylish delivery of the eight principal players.

Four couples have been invited to a 10th anniversary party. The first to arrive, Chris and Ken Gorman (Majorie Marks and Steve Tuley) find that the host has just passed out after shooting himself in the ankle. The hostess and servants are nowhere to be found. Chris and

Ken make hasty assumptions based on rumors they have heard circulating at their tennis club.

As each of the other couples arrive, Chris and Ken feel compelled to try and hide what has happened. Their efforts, only partially successful, lead to the hilarious sub-narratives that give the audience about 2 1/2 hours of non-stop mirth.

Toleivic ably plays Ken with broad strokes as the character raves up and down the stairs, boldly blocks passages, goes temporarily

deaf, and generally succumbs to bouts of hysterical behavior.

In counterpoint, Mark's Chris works hard at keeping her cool, and Marks is wonderful at conveying her character's crisp, dry sense of humor.

The second couple to arrive, Claire and Lenny Gany (Carla Biel-ski and Dan Castle) are already flustered by the accident they've just had with their new BMW. Biel-ski is very convincing as the lightly bitchy, ultra-sophisticated Claire,

and Castle has a delightfully droll delivery that gets maximum laugh mileage from even the simplest line.

The third couple, Cookie and Ernie Casack (Diane D'Agostino and Mark Carley) are especially dense. Ernie, a psychiatrist, is a laid-back bungler, while Cookie is a bubbly, head-immune to the put-downs she elicits. D'Agostino and Carley are both highly credible in their respective roles.

The last couple, Cassie and Glenn Cooper (Holly Hellsten and

Tim Reinman) arrive already squabbling. Reinman is very good as the slightly oily politician obsessed with furthering his career. Hellsten is fine as his put-upon wife who finds solace in her mystical crystals.

Barbara Michals is a retired Southfield English teacher. A theater critic for the last 17 years, she is an inveterate playgoer who regularly catches up on all the New York productions.

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