

Talented Ridgedale cast tries to keep 'The Nerd' afloat

Ridgedale Players present "The Nerd," Thursday, May 16-Sunday, May 19, 205 W. Long Lake Road, Troy. Tickets \$7-\$9. Call (810) 958-7049.
BY HELEN ZUCKER
SPECIAL WRITER

The Ridgedale Players production of Larry Shue's "The Nerd" is a mixed bag. Directed by Jim Funk and Linda Martini, the cast does its best to keep this uneven script afloat.

Dave Scott is totally believable as Willum Cubberty, the nice architect who believes he owes his life to the nerd who has saved his life in Vietnam. Cubberty gives up his couch, his home, and his job before finding the nerve to admit he needs his sanity. Scott manages to be distraught and pleasant at the same time.

Viki Hagle gives us an intelligent, capable Tansy McGinnis. Tansy does weather on the evening news, and she's moving to Virginia. Willum or no Willum. Though she'd rather Willum was in the neighborhood. Viki plays Tansy as a very "today" sort of woman, brisk, inventive, nice clothes, with a heart somewhere.

Tom Coffey as Axel Hammond, the drama critic, has all the best lines. Coffey makes the most of them; he flings them in our faces

with all the malicious wit he can summon up. Coffey's dark pony tail and his sneering, Dracula expression help the production. Axel is master of the put down, and Coffey understands that.

Carl Jones plays Rick Standman, the world's most impossible roommate. Jones comes in the door in a Barney costume, but the nerd doesn't mind a little lovey thing about him. You want to

break his taped glasses and throw all his pens out the window as soon as you see him. Standman uses a character we want to kill as soon as he unpacks, and proceeds to give us more reasons as the play progresses. Jones manages to be incredibly unaware and unlovable throughout. We sigh with relief when he leaves, though the "rituals" that cause him to

vanish are unbelievable.

Laura Kerr is wonderful as Clelia Waldgrave, mother of Thor and teacher of slow learners, who breaks dishes for relief. Kerr walks as if life were too much for her. Her prim clothes and neat black coil hide a trembling, fragile wreck of a woman, and Kerr lets us see the nobility that holds Clelia together.

John Youngerman yells a lot as Warnock "Tikki" Waldgrave, Thor's father, Clelia's husband, and Willum's employer. Tikki comes in the door frustrated and stays that way for the entire play. He's the wealthy man who's meant to lose his Italian shoes, the employer who's meant to have cottage cheese dropped on his suit. Youngerman has no room to breathe; the script gives us a one-dimensional Waldgrave.

a blood pressure victim.

Gerry Martini as Thor Waldgrave screams at Barney and faints a lot. Martini seems a robust lad, not given to fainting fits at such small stuff. He knows his lines and seems at home onstage.

The set by Andy Rink, Dan Fuller, Dawn Hooper and crew is admirable.



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JET presents comedy

BY KEELY WYCONIX
STAFF WRITER

Catch an off-Broadway experience as Jewish Ensemble Theatre presents "Social Security" by Andrew Bergman. This comedy about love at every age runs through June 9 at the Aaron DeRoy Theatre inside the Jewish Community Center, 6800 West Maple Road, West Bloomfield. Call (810) 788-2900 for ticket information.

"Social Security" is directed by Robert Grossman, and stars John Michael Manfredi of Rochester, David, Cheryl Williams (Barbara), Joseph Haynes (Martin), Rochelle Rosenthal (Trudy), Karen Sheridan (Sophie), and Robert Grossman as Maurice.

Manfredi, who played Arnold Beckoff in JET's recent production "Torch Song Trilogy," portrays a character completely different from Arnold a drag queen. This time, he is David Kahn, a young, successful, good looking New York art dealer.

Cheryl Williams of Chicago, a graduate of Waynes State University's Hilberry Theatre Fellowship Program, plays Barbara his wife.

Karen Sheridan who plays Barbara's mother, Sophie, is a professional clown, "and her comic timing is beyond belief. She's a very funny lady," said Evelyn Orbach, JET artistic director.

"This is the first time we've permitted a director to also be in the play," said Orbach. "He's appearing in a marvelous, cameo role where he plays this 98-year-old world famous artist, whose eyes still sparkle, and who continues to work. We didn't really intend to cast Robert, but we couldn't find anyone we liked better, so we allowed him to play the role."

Rosenthal who plays Trudy, Barbara's suburban sister, owns Studio 330, a boutique on Telegraph Road in Birmingham with her husband Randy Forrester. "She's a professional actress, and hasn't performed on the JET stage for about three years, and we're delighted to have her back. She's very funny," said Orbach.

"Social Security" is a light-hearted examination of a mother-daughter relationship, the lessons of love and the importance of discovering or rekindling passion.

Barbara and David are New York yuppie art dealers who live comfortably. This all changes when Barbara's sister, Trudy, and her husband Martin, come to visit. They have disastrous news; their newly collected daughter has embraced the sexual revolution.

"The never really goes out, you just have to keep fanning the flames," is how Orbach describes the message of the play.

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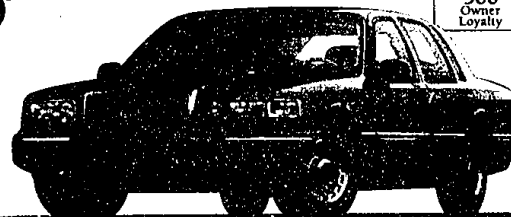
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