

**THEATER**

# Veteran players steal show in funny '70, Girls, 70'

St. Dunstan's Theatre Guild presents "70, Girls, 70," 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Nov. 21-22, St. Dunstan's Theatre on Lone Pine Road (near Cranbrook Road), Bloomfield Hills. Complimentary parking at Christ Church Cranbrook shuttle service to theater. Tickets: \$15, students under 18 and seniors over 65, \$12; call (248) 644-0527.

BY BARBARA MICHALS  
SPECIAL WRITER

In an odd variation on "Cinderella," the Kander and Ebb musical "70, Girls, 70" has a bejeweled fairy godmother turn a cranky group of senior citizens into a lively gang of fur thieves. The current production by St. Dunstan's Theatre Guild of Cranbrook allows many veteran players to shine.

Ida (Fran Hayes), dripping fur and jewelry, returns to her old pals at a dowdy senior apartment building in Manhattan. Having learned of a serious illness sometime back, she decided

to live her remaining life to the fullest and sort of fall into shoplifting. She proposes her friends join her in an expanded operation, not only to enrich their own lives, but also to spill up the apartment building and open it to homeless seniors.

While the show offers rich comic roles, the musical numbers are sillier than the plot. Half the numbers have little or nothing to do with the story, and even the ones that do are not memorable despite the excellent skills of the performers.

Hayes is full of gusto as Ida, so are co-stars William Everson as Harry, Barbara Brown as Gert, Margory Brooks as Eunice, and Don Schoro as Walter. All are wonderfully funny and sing and dance with zest.

Also adding to the fun are other senior players in supporting roles - Lillian Hitchcock, Keith Lepard, Susie Raich, Bettie Robinson, Al Rosie, Amelia Duke, Robert Raich, and Irving Ruben.

Among the younger generation, Krystyn Irvine and Kimberly Brown sing up a storm as the friendly cafe waitresses who also join the gang of thieves.

Patricia Richards, artificially aged as a grandmother, is a comic treat whenever she's on stage, and Jeff Drown is very likable as the accommodating doorman Eddie.

Together they're a knock-out in "Go Visit Your Grandmother," with Richards' lively dancing enhancing Drown's outstanding voice.

Undoubtedly, the funniest scene is when the gang decides to "play old" when questioned by a policeman, their hard-of-hearing antics very recognizably true-to-life.

Music director Barbara Anne Gowans, stage director Laura Raich and her assistant John Irvine, and choreographer Robert Campion assisted by Victoria Costantini cannot be faulted; they do the most with essentially weak material.

Unfortunately, at last Saturday night's performance the age of the star players was made all too noticeable by the many line flubs. A few missed lighting cues and a loud smoke alarm set off by a very small on-stage explosion also showed a need for more polish.

# Millennium to present 'Fantastick' show

The Millennium Centre opens its 1997-98 season Friday, Nov. 21 with "The Fantasticks," which continues through Nov. 23.

Chris Guyotte, artistic director at The Millennium Centre said "The Fantasticks is a fabulous show, it's the longest running production in the history of theater. Now in its 37th year at the Sullivan Street Playhouse in New York City, 'The Fantasticks' offers an evening of music, drama and laughter.

Guyotte said the story has appeal for everyone. "It's the story of parents wondering how their children turned out so different from their expectations, to children trying to make their

**On Stage**  
**"The Fantasticks"**  
When: 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Nov. 21-22; 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 23.  
Where: At the Millennium Centre, 15600 J.L. Hudson Drive, Southfield.  
Tickets: Reserved tickets \$10 and \$12, groups of 20 or more can purchase tickets at \$9. Dinner and show ticket available from The Millennium Centre box office for \$20. Patrons will enjoy a family style buffet at the Stockyard Restaurant, and then see "The Fantasticks" at the Millennium Centre. Call the box office (248) 652-1225 or Ticketmaster (248) 645-6666. For information, call (248) 652-7000.

own mark on the world, and neighbors working together to achieve their goals."  
"It's a beautiful story, and

funny," said Chris Jones of Southfield who stars as Matt.  
"We plan to do more programming for young people," said

Guyotte.  
Upcoming events include the Gemini Holiday Family Concerts 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 6 and "The Brentwood Musicians" in March.

On Jan. 15 the Millennium Centre will hold open auditions for youths ages 13-18 to join "The New Millennium," a resident youth theatre company dedicated to exposing area youth to all elements of theater and the arts from technical to performance.

"If you start exposing youngsters to theater now, we will have an educated audience later on," said Guyotte.

# Troy Players introduce audiences to 'The Foreigner'

Troy Players presents "The Foreigner" 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Nov. 21-22 and 2 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 23 at the Hunter Community Center, 509 Fisher Ct. (east of Livonia) in Clawson. Tickets are \$8 general, \$7 for senior citizens and children. Information: (248) 879-1285. BY JON KATZ  
SPECIAL WRITER

Charlie has a terminal case of shyness. By pretending not to be able to speak English, he doesn't have to talk. But oh, the things he hears!

And with that, with Larry Shiu's popular comedy, "The Foreigner," Troy Players kicks off a new season in a new, temporary home. Theatergoers loyal to the Troy group are urged to continue their support by driving two miles south to Clawson's Hunter Community Center.

A small crowd encouraged the cast through opening night, which included an actor's unscripted tantrum that we'll get to later.

But first, back to the very strange plot. Good old Charlie has accompanied his buddy, a British Staff Sergeant nicknamed "Froggy," to the backwoods of Georgia. There, Froggy, a munitions expert, is participating in some army maneuver that we didn't quite get, but it really

doesn't matter. While Froggy's off blowing things up, Charlie's stuck at a bed and breakfast with an assortment of Southern dia-comforts.

Charlie, as noted, is unable to deal with people ("I've often wondered how does one acquire a personality?"). By passing himself off as "The Foreigner," maybe he can survive the three-day ordeal except that there's some strange going on at Betty Meek's Fishing Lodge Resort. Owen, the county property inspector, wants to evict poor Miss Betty for his own nefarious schemes, aided by the Rev. David, who's engaged to pregnant and trusting Catherine. Also on board is Catherine's dim-witted teenage boy, Ellard.

Imagine Latka from TV's "Taxi" cast as Dudley Do-Right. As Charlie makes up his somewhere-in-Europe accent as he goes along, he finds himself not only acquiring that elusive personality but a large dose of courage to go with it.

As the title character, Gary Bosok is an appealing teddy bear. He gets some great opportunities in the second act to take over the stage and doesn't drop the ball. His big moment - telling a mystery story in that phony-baloney dialect - has the youngsters in the audience rol-

licking.  
Mog Kaatz (Betty) and Mike Kopera (Ellard) make the very most of their roles. Betty makes that common mistake of thinking that maybe Charlie will comprehend her if she screams in his ear ("He don't understand no English - even if it's real loud!"), and the joke never wears thin.

Young Kopera, a stage veteran already, makes us see just how slow these gears are turning, and there's a cute bit between Ellard and Betty with "hominny grits" being mistaken for "how many grits."

Troy Players' mainstay John Faris is funny as the dastardly friend Owen, who takes an instant dislike to the stranger ("We don't get many o' your kind in these part.") He's evil-in-overalls, and we sure are glad when

he "gits" his duo. Kerry Plague's Reverend David shrieks a lot, and we're not sure why Mary Hyde's Catherine is so ornery. Maybe it's the shrieking.

That tantrum we mentioned was thrown by Jason Groh, as Froggy. Tearing off his stage mustache for no reason apparent to the audience, he proclaimed in character "I hate these things" and proceeded to ad lib about it twice more before picking the mustache up off the floor and exiting. It wasn't funny. It wasn't clever. And it threw off the other actors. On the one hand, that's live theater: the actors are out there on the edge, and every performance is different. On the other hand, director Rob Chrenko has hopefully taken this actor out to the woodshed for a Southern-style talking-to.

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