

in the arts

'MHF' Is A Rousing Success

BY BETSY BAKER
I'm the most happy critic in the whole St. Lawrence Valley because I can say, without hesitation, that last week's Crane Summer Music Theater production of "Most Happy Fella" was a smashing success.

It's a tough show to do at all, let alone do well, but veterans Betty Baritaud and Harry Phillips and a superb cast put it all together to the delight of Potsdam audiences, including sell-out crowds for the last three performances.

"MHF" is a musical, but not musical comedy, although there are moments of comic relief. There is relatively little spoken dialogue for a three-act play, but there is much solo, duet and ensemble work for the cast, which numbers more than 50, including chorus.

The music itself, while appealing, does not have wide audience recognition. Only one number, "Standin' On The Corner," is likely to be known to those who do not know the rest of the show.

And the music is difficult for the singers. It requires high-caliber performers, with relatively wide voice ranges. In fact, "MHF" is really opera, only lightly disguised as musical theater.

The story can also present problems. Written in the 50's by Frank Loesser, "MHF" is based on the 1924 play "They Knew What They Wanted," by Sidney Howard. Loesser, although he added characters and situations, did little to flesh out the bare bones of Howard's story of Tony, the aging California vineyard owner, and Rosabella, his young mail-order bride.

The show's success depends on the performers, who must bring the drab little story to life. The cast of "MHF" was well-chosen for that task.

Paul Roberts, as Tony, was simply splendid. He was Tony, irascible, stubborn and opinionated, but sweetly tender and very much in love with his Rosabella. His Italian-accented English was good, so good that it was a real surprise to hear him speak "normal English" after the performance. Roberts, who has appeared in local productions of "La Boheme" and "Orpheus And The Underworld," learned the role of Tony in just two weeks.

Roberts, who holds a master's degree from the Crane School of Music, has a robust tenor voice, beautifully controlled throughout its range. Particularly pleasing was his moving and expressive duet "How Beautiful The Days," sung with leading lady Roxann Kerkorian.

Lovely Rosabella
Roxann Kerkorian was a lovely Rosabella. As the young waitress who comes to Tony's vineyard to be his bride, she was always convincing, never cute or coy. She had some good dramatic moments with Tony and other

members of the cast, and she handled a challenging singing role well.

Sondra Gelb, an undergraduate student in the Crane School also turned in a fine performance as Tony's spinster sister Marie, as did Guy Lamson as the foreman Joe.

Comic relief there was aplenty, in the persons of Rose Holcomb, Mike Toth, Guy Jacobs, Robert Holland and Dale Zurbrick. The first two, Holcomb and Toth, were delightful as Cleo, Rosabella's waitress friend and Herman, the ever-smiling farmhand.

Holcomb, with her split-second timing and easy stage presence, was reminiscent of another Southern waitress, TV's popular Flo. Holcomb was Dolly in last year's Crane Summer Theater production of "Hello, Dolly!"

Toth, who in real life is Rev. Michael Toth, gives a convincing performance as Herman. Toth is also a veteran of "Dolly" and other shows. As Cleo's romantic interest he smiled winningly through duets and ensembles, but he did little to win his lady until Cleo was threatened in the last act. Then his smile finally became a frown as he defended Cleo with the song "I Made A Fist."

The trio of Jacobs, Holland and Zurbrick provided some of the show's "most happy" comedic moments. As Italian chefs-bakers, the three cavorted through a near-slapstick routine in the first act, presenting the food and drink for Tony's wedding banquet in "Abundanza." They cheered the despondent Rosabella with "Benvenuto" (welcome in Italian) and returned in Act Three with a hilarious reprise of the banquet scene.

Able performances were also turned in by Paul Jados, Elisabeth Wightman, Monte Calvert, Lansing Laraway, William Rowe, Al Robinson, Karen Jados, Danny Kowalchuk, Amy Stevens and Philip Shatraw.

Sets for "MHF" were by Joseph Flauto, who will soon leave SUNY Potsdam's drama area for another post. It will be Potsdam's loss; Flauto is a gifted designer, and his "suggestion of scenery" sets were most effective.

Choreography was by Katherine Schmidt, also a Crane graduate, as were many others associated with the production. Both the dances themselves and the numerous dance movements were creatively done.

Costumes, supervised by Maura Clifford, were neat and simple, authentic to the late 20's setting of the play.

Director Betty Baritaud and producer Harry Phillips have given Potsdam audiences many fine productions over the years, including a 1961 production of "MHF." Both are now retired from the Crane School, actively retired if the energy level of their most recent production is any indication.

The chorus and orchestra were excellent. The chorus' diction was the best this reviewer has heard from a local performing group in years, and it was matched, incidentally by the fine diction of the principals in the cast.

The orchestra played well, but even better, the instrumentalists didn't overpower the performers on stage. Again, for the first time in years, it was possible to hear the soloists as well as understand them. Harry Phillips conducted the orchestra.

All in all it was a memorable evening. The many young local performers in the cast have been fortunate that their home schools offer strong arts programs to prepare them for such productions as "MHF." And all of us are lucky to have so readily available the makings of professional quality entertainment. Most of all, it was especially good to see the Baritaud-Phillips team in operation again.

People

FINANCE AWARD

The Hospital Financial Management Association, based in Chicago, has given Bruce Shaver, Norwood, an advanced membership. The award was based on his education and experience in hospital finance. Shaver received a BSBA from Ohio State University and an MBA from Clarkson College. He has been financial director of hospitals in New York and Pennsylvania since entering that field in 1973.

CORRELL ATTENDS COURSES

Arlene W. Correll, GRI, president of the Arlene W. Correll Realty Corporation, recently attended a three-day course in Marketing Management given by the Realtors National Marketing Institute in Houston, Texas. Senior instructor of the course was Gil Schwartz, a graduate of the Clarkson College Class of 1942. He is now with the firm Sahara Realty in Las Vegas, Nev. Successful completion of the course leads to the attainment of the Marketing Institute's certified real estate brokerage professional designation. Mrs. Correll also recently completed a graduate real estate seminar on residential and investment property at Ithaca College. While there, she also completed a faculty development course in preparation for a real estate course she will be teaching this fall at Canton ATC.

PHALANX AWARD

Paul R. Austin, 36 Leroy St., a junior electrical and computer engineering major at Clarkson College, was presented the Eta Kappa Nu Award at the college's annual Phalanx Day ceremonies. Phalanx is the college's honorary leadership society.

The Eta Kappa Nu Award is given annually by the electrical and computer engineering fraternity to an outstanding junior electrical and computer engineering major. In addition to the recognition, Austin received a student membership in the IEEE.

ON DEAN'S LIST

Paul Joseph Jados, 9 Pleasant Street, Potsdam, was named to the Dean's List at Indiana University, Bloomington, for the second semester of 1977-78. To be eligible for the honor, a student must earn a 3.5 grade average or better.

PASSES EXAM

Peggy J. Jensen, realtor-associate for Correll Realty Corp. recently completed her brokers course and passed the New York State brokers' exam. Ms. Jensen will remain with the Correll Realty Corp. as a fulltime realtor. She is the wife of Lawrence Jensen, manager of the Canton Acme Market and mother of four children. Ms. Jensen is a champion bowling enthusiast.



PEGGY JENSEN

20% off Superwear tops, Super Denim® jeans. Think school. Think JCPenney.



Sale 4.40
Will be 5.50. Crewneck styled athletic top for boys is easy-care polyester/cotton. Welt or taped short sleeves. 8 to 20.

Sale 5.60
Reg. \$7. Boys' flare leg denim are no-iron polyester/cotton. Reinforced knees in sizes 8-12. Regular and slim sizes; 8 to 16. Husky sizes, reg. \$8, Sale 6.40

Sale 3.60
Will be 4.50. Short sleeve athletic knit top of easy-care polyester/cotton has trim on neck and sleeves. 4 to 7. Long sleeve, reg. 5.50, Sale 4.40

Sale 5.20
Reg. 6.50. Heavyweight jeans for little boys are no-iron polyester/cotton. Elastic back, reinforced knees. Sizes 3 to 7.



Sale 3.60
Will be 4.50. Knit tees for girls have color trim around neck and sleeves. Polyester/cotton. 7 to 14.

Sale 7.20
Reg. \$9. High-waisted denim jeans for girls are easy-care polyester/cotton. Great details and colors for fall. Straight or flare leg. 7 to 14.

Sale \$3
Will be 3.75. Little girls' short sleeve crewneck is cotton/polyester. Great colors for S,M,L. 4 to 6x.

Sale \$6
Reg. 7.50. Super Denims® for girls are made of durable, brushed polyester/cotton. Neat fashion details, too. 4 to 6x.

Sale prices effective through Aug. 12th.

This is JCPenney

Potsdam Plaza

Shop Monday through Saturday, 9:30 to 9:00

Store phone 265-4900; Catalog 265-4800

Library Schedules Family Film Night

Family film night, showing 7-9 p.m. Thursday, August 3 at the Potsdam Public Library are the following: "Spider", "Rikki Tikki Tavi", "Peter and the Wolf" and "Suspension"- A Tribute to Alfred Hitchcock.

Band Concert Set

The Potsdam Community Band, under the direction of Elmer James, will give a free open-air concert at 7 p.m. Tuesday in front of Hooper Hall on Outer Main Street on the State University College at Potsdam campus.

People

ENTER CAR SHOW

Two Potsdam residents are among those entered in the Alexandria Bay Centennial auto show Aug. 19 and 20. Susan K. Sharlow, of Rt. 1 has entered a 1918 Ford T-bucket and Fred Robar, of 140 Maple St. has entered a 1966 custom Dodge Charger.

Awards are decided by a panel of expert judges, headed this year by Terry La Fleur of Norwood. LaFleur is a prominent custom car builder and exhibitor.

MINISTRY GRADUATE

Colin E. Curtis, son of Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Curtis, Brasher Falls, received a bachelor degree in ministry from Baptist Bible Institute, Graceville, Fla., on May 28, 1978.

Rev. Curtis and his family have recently moved to Chancellor, Ala., where he is pastor of the United Methodist Church. Mrs. Curtis was the former Mary LaTrace, also of Brasher Falls. They have three children, Rebecca Mary, Elizabeth Margaret and Colin Jr.

LAPORTE IS GRADUATE

Miss Michele LaPointe, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Wayne LaPointe, of Potsdam, is a recent graduate of Harpur College, Binghamton, N.Y., with a bachelor's degree in literature and journalism.

No Specials!
Just low prices.

Liquors

Chilled Wines

North County
Bottle Shop

West Stockholm

CUSTOM COVERED

in your choice of fabric . . .

Incomparable
HENREDON
at 20% savings

This sale offers much more than just savings. By making Henredon your choice for upholstered furniture you are bringing to your home the finest in impeccable design and quality workmanship. Each piece will endure the test of time, offering you comfort that never grows old.



Henredon fine furniture

The rich beauty of Traditional never goes out of style!

On sale thru the month of August

Kaiff's
Furniture Stores

46 MARKET ST. POTSDAM