

**Eighth Season
1996 - 1997**

**President:
Sandra Dickson**

The Cast

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Billy Crocker..... | Ricardo Ipina |
| Reno Sweeney..... | Kathy Getman |
| Moonface Martin..... | Rick Patrick |
| Hope Harcourt..... | Melissa Blanton |
| Lord Evelyn Oakleigh..... | Ken Kinard |
| Bonnie..... | Pauline Player |
| Elisha Whitney..... | Jim Britt |
| Evangeline Harcourt..... | Debbie Parrish |
| Ship's Captain..... | Fred Stikkel |
| Fred/Ship's Purser..... | Jerry Ellis |
| Reporter/Sailor..... | Phil Jones |
| Photographer/Sailor..... | Jason Moon |
| FBI Agent/Sailor..... | Curtis Knowles |
| FBI Agent/Sailor..... | Brett Lane |
| Sailors..... | Doug Britt, B. Scott Dickson, Nathan Suggs |
| Angels..... | Kristy Barton, Laura Burns, Heather Hull, Courtney Irwin, and Candace Monerief |
| Ling and Ching..... | Themselves |
| Young Lady..... | Carrie Getman |
| Old Lady..... | Susan Mann |
| Companion..... | Cindy Hill |
| Minister..... | Jack Pruden |

and
Pippin as "Cheeky"

Director's Notes

Many remember Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire and the days of the "BIG" Hollywood musical. The world was more innocent then and the common plot of "boy meets girl", "boy loses girl" "boy gets girl" sent our hearts soaring. With music by Cole Porter, "Anything Goes" takes many of us back to our youth and for others who don't remember those blissful days, it provides an escape into an "old" world fantasy.

During rehearsals many of our cast members have said, "I remember this song!"; while others have said, "Who is Fred Astaire?". But everyone has worked very hard--especially Ricardo Ipina (musical director) and Michal Shirley (choreographer). We hope you enjoy our tribute to the "BIG" Hollywood Musical.

Production Staff

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Director..... | Sandra Dickson |
| Musical Director..... | Ricardo Ipina |
| Choreographer..... | Michal Shirley |
| Stage Manager/Props..... | Brenda Carter |
| Assist. Stage Manager..... | Sean McManus |
| Set Construction Supervisor..... | Jerry Ellis |
| Set Construction and Changes..... | Cast & Crew |
| Lighting Design..... | Liz Miller |
| Lighting Technician..... | Mike Burrage |
| Spot Light Operator..... | Jerry Dickson |
| Costumer..... | Marge Pruden |
| Costume Assistants..... | Jacquelyn Clark and Mary Helen Watson |
| Make-up..... | Cast |
| Pianist..... | Greg Mullet |
| Musicians..... | Gail Bearrentine & Liz Miller |
| Box Office Manager..... | Jack Pruden & Deba Dostor |
| Concessions..... | Dale Meehan & Joanne Griner |
| Publicity..... | Liz Miller |
| Photography..... | Brenda Carter |
| Program Layout..... | Brenda Kay Brunston |

The Setting

ACT I

- Scene 1: A smokey Manhattan bar
- Scene 2: The afterdeck of an oceanliner
- Scene 3: On deck--that evening
- Scene 4: Whitney's Stateroom & Moon's Cabin
- Scene 5: On deck--the next morning
- Scene 6: Evelyn's Stateroom
- Scene 7: On deck--twilight
- Scene 8: On Deck--early the next morning

ACT II

- Scene 1: The ship's Nightclub
- Scene 2: The ship's Brig
- Scene 3: On deck--later that night
- Scene 4: The ship's Brig--early morning
- Scene 5: On deck

ANYTHING GOES

SEPTEMBER 1996

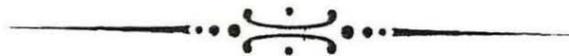
Musical Numbers

Act I

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| Overture..... | Orchestra |
| <i>I Get A Kick Out OF You</i> | Reno |
| <i>There's No Cure Like Travel</i> | Captian and Sailors |
| <i>Bon Voyage</i> | Sailors and Passengers |
| <i>Your'e The Top</i> | Reno and Billy |
| <i>Easy To Love</i> | Billy |
| <i>The Crew Song</i> | Whitney |
| <i>There'll Always Be A Lady Fair</i> | Sailors |
| <i>Friendship</i> | Moonface and Reno |
| <i>It's De-lovely</i> | Hope and Billy |
| <i>Anything Goes</i> | Reno and Chorus |

Act II

| | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Entre'Acte..... | Orchestra |
| <i>Public Enemy Number One</i> | Captain, Purser and Chorus |
| <i>Blow Gabriel Blow</i> | Reno and Chorus |
| <i>Goodbye, Little Dream, Goodbye</i> | Hope |
| <i>Be Like The Blue Bird</i> | Moonface |
| <i>All Through The Night</i> | Hope, Billy and Sailors |
| <i>The Gypsy In Me</i> | Evelyn |
| <i>Buddie, Beware</i> | Bonnie and Sailors |
| Finale..... | Reno, Evelyn, Billy and Chorus |



Anything Goes' really lives up to its name

By KATHY BLANTON
For The Valdosta Daily Times

Singing, laughing, flirting and mad escapades characterized Theatre Guild's latest production, "Anything Goes."

The large dancing cast gleefully performed interpretative renditions of ever popular sing-alongs such as "I Get A Kick Out of You" and "You're the Top." Large cast scenes led audiences in the carnival atmosphere of an oceanliner not unlike "The Love Boat." But this trip certainly had its share of criminals, floozies, angels and pastors as jaunty sailors rounded out a crew of energetic shipmates that gave good chase to a bon voyage.

Theatre Guild veterans Jim Britt, Ricardo Ipina and Rick Patrick kept the rhythm moving as key manipulators in the shipboard romances or previous affairs revisited that balloon and boom throughout the musical. Harmonizing local vocals Kathy Getman and the De-love-ly Hope, Melissa Blanton, sing and dance a siren's song around the young fellas tempting and rejecting with swish of a skirt.

The very English Lord Evelyn, Ken Kinard and the decidedly sugar-babe Bonnie, a.k.a. Pauline Player, captivated the audience with their fleshy revelations and hilarious posturing. Entities unto themselves, Ling and Ching, a Chinese pair, remain nameless though their tiptoeing appearances punctuated every scene with a giggle. As a whole, the cast orchestrated a phenomenal stage production packed with dancing and singing. Their slap stick entertainment coupled with impeccable timing kept the shipboard comedy rolling right along.

No rough waters for this crew as they closed director Sandra Dickson's show with a splash. Floating right along with the string of successes characteristic of Theatre Guild, "Anything Goes" was a play of significance for the Valdosta Playhouse troupe. Reserve seats for the next hit, "The Heiress," and relax to the smooth sailing of a truly professional group of amateurs. For reservations call 24-STAGE.

Kathy Blanton is a teacher at Lowndes Middle School,

ANYTHING GOES

The Cast

in order of appearance

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Maria | Sara Lynn Gilliam |
| Dr. Austin Sloper | Jerry Dickson |
| Lavina Penniman | Pauline Player |
| Catherine Sloper | Carrie Lee Daffron |
| Elizabeth Almond | Linda Boyett |
| Marian Almond | Jess Hill |
| Arthur Townsend | Curtis Knowles |
| Morris Townsend | Ken Kinard |
| Mrs. Montgomery | Debbie Parrish |

Setting

Place: Front parlor of the house of Dr. Sloper

Time: 1850

Act 1

Scene 1: An October Evening

Scene 2: An Afternoon, Two Weeks Later

Scene 3: The Next Morning

Act 2

Scene 1: An April Night Six Months Later

Scene 2: Two Hours Later

Scene 3: A Morning Three Days Later

Scene 4: A Summer Evening Almost Two Years Later

Production Staff

Technical Directors

Properties Mistress

Properties Assistants

Set Construction

Light & Sound Technicians

Program

Photography

Publicity

Box Office

Jerry Ellis

Fred Stikkel

Kristy Barton

Lynn Gilliam

Curtis Knowles

Cast, Crew & Designers

Bill McFarlin

Carol Luker

Michael Burrage

Liz Miller

Brenda Carter

Liz Miller

Jerry Ellis

Special Thanks

from Theatre Guild Valdosta to the following people for their contributions to this production.

Dr. Thomas Getman

Ellen Pack

Ricky Pound and Farmer's Furniture

Miller Hardware

Jerry, Sandra & Scott Dickson

Kristy Barton

Linda Boyett

Brenda Williams

WHS Drama

Kathleen Barton

from the Director for their continued support

VSU Theatre Faculty

Bob, Sarah & Diane Brunston

Brenda Carter

Wendell

The Cast & The Crew

Liz Miller

Michael Burrage

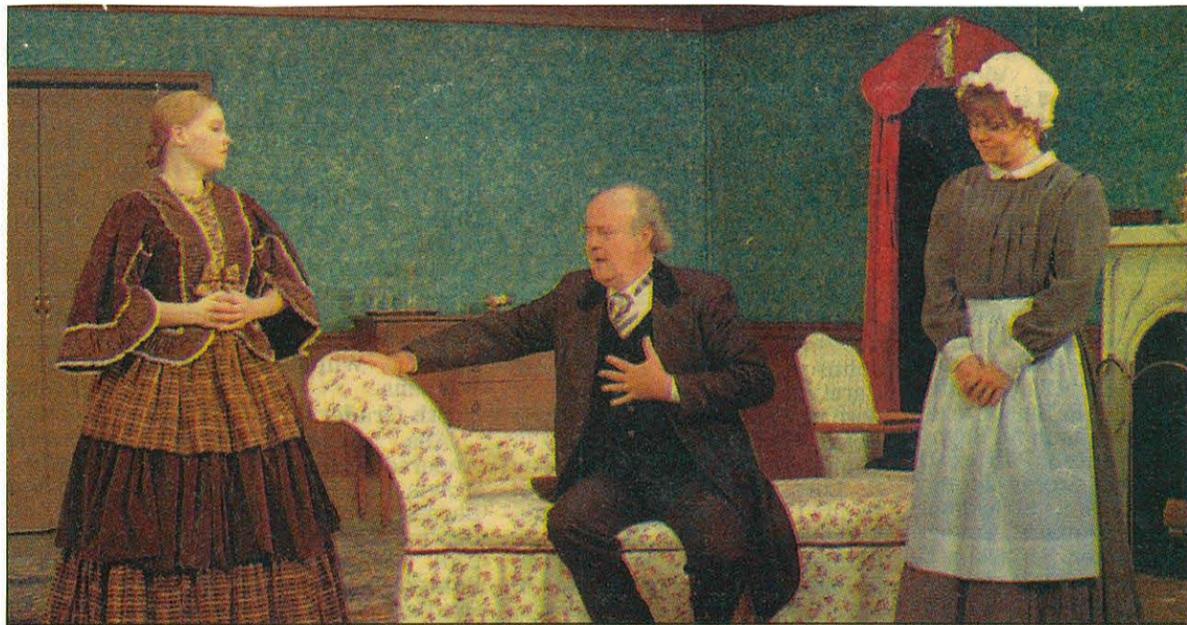
Jerry Ellis

Fred Stikkel

THE HEIRESS NOVEMBER 1996



Morris Townsend, played by Ken Kinard, proposes marriage to Dr. Sloper's daughter, Catherine.



Above, Dr. Austin Sloper, center, played by Jerry Dickson, tells his daughter Catherine, played by Carrie Lee Daffron, left, and the parlor maid Maria, played by Sara Lynn Gilliam, that he is dying.

Tess Hill as Marion Almond and Curtis Knowles as Arthur Townsend, foreground, talk on the couch as other cast members rehearse their scenes.



The Crew

Producer Mary Ann Green
 Director Rick Patrick
 Asst. Dir./Stage Mgr. Elizabeth Miller
 Lighting Design Mike Burrage, Elizabeth Miller
 Costume Design Marge Pruden
 Light Operators Mike Burrage, Bill McFarlin
 Set Construction Darlene Caviness, Jerry Ellis, Carl Glasscock, Mike Glasscock, Monica Glasscock, Mary Ann Green, Sarah Gunsolus, Tess Hill, Jenna Hughes, Allison King, Segal Owens
 Marquis Pictures Brenda Carter
 Ushers Ansley Childree, Monica Glasscock, Tammy Glasscock

The Cast

Gatekeeper Mark Dougherty
 Littlest Angel Carl Glasscock
 Patriarch Prophet Segal Owens
 Flying Master Mike Glasscock
 Choirmaster Kristy Barton
 Matronly Angel Phyllis Childree
 Understanding Angel Mary Ann Green
 Heavenly Trumpeters Sarah Gunsolus, Jenna Hughes
 Heavenly Messenger Allison King
 Other Angels Heather Hull, Donna Joyner

Special Thanks !!!!!!!!!!!!!

Valwood School
 Fred Stikkell
 South Georgia Medical Center
 Families of the cast
 Joyce Britt

The Littlest Angel is produced by special arrangement of The Dramatic Publishing Company.

THE LITTLEST ANGEL DECEMBER 1996



The littlest angel, played by Carl Glasscock, talks with the understanding angel played by Mary Ann Green. — Times photo by Paul Leavy

Theatre Guild Valdosta performing play Sunday

By BEN BUTLER
Times Staff Writer

The voices of children fill the Dosta Theatre as the cast of the play, "The Littlest Angel," prepare for rehearsal.

Theatre Guild Valdosta will present two performances of "The Littlest Angel" at 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. Sunday as a part of Downtown Valdosta's Holiday Open House.

Tickets are \$2 each, and seating is on a first-come, first-served basis. Director Rick Patrick estimates the Dosta Theatre can hold 150 people.

"The Littlest Angel," written by Patricia Gray, is based on a children's story by Charles Tazewell.

"It's a children's classic that deals with a little boy who finds himself in heaven," Patrick said. "The charm of the story is that it's about a little child in a grown-up world."

"Everything he does — just everything turns out wrong."

The play is 30 minutes long and features a newcomer to the stage as the littlest angel.

Carl Glasscock, 10, has never performed in public before.

"I think it's a fun thing," he said. "It's just that whenever you act, you get to put out your emotions."

Patrick, a former music teacher, directed a one-act play for the

Theatre Guild last year.

The most challenging parts of putting on "The Littlest Angel" were some of the technical aspects, he said.

He added that the most rewarding part was working with the cast.

"This has been a fantastic cast to work with," Patrick said.

According to assistant director Liz Miller, Carl shines as the littlest angel.

Even though the littlest angel is in heaven, he deals with the same problems earthly kids have.

"(The audience) is going to learn that it's very hard to be a kid," Carl said.

The littlest angel has a harrowing experience in Heaven until a heavenly messenger goes down to earth to retrieve the littlest angel's prize possession. It is a box filled with wonderful things — a butterfly, a bird's egg, two white stones and a dog collar.

The time comes for the birth of Christ, and each of the angels is expected to give a gift. The only thing the littlest angel has is his special box.

"The littlest angel learns the value of giving," Patrick said. "Any gift given with sincerity — no matter how small — can become something great."

'Late Sunday Afternoon, Early Sunday Evening'
 directed by Debbie Parrish

A granddaughter and her grandmother face the pains of "growing up" in this dramatic, yet humourous, play.

Donna Joyner as Olivia
 Elizabeth Miller as Libby

'Life Under Water'
 directed by Ricardo Ipina

This play explores the loneliness of life, and the insensitivities people have towards others.

Kristy Barton as Amy-Joy
 Heather Hull as Amy-Beth
 Mark Daugherty as Kip
 Mary Ann Green as Jinx
 Ken Kinnard as Hank

'When God Comes For Breakfast, You Don't Burn The Toast'
 directed by Linda Boyett

Harry invited God over for breakfast but forgets to tell his wife, Bea, until the night before. They both oversleep and everything goes haywire (toasterwire) from there.

Phyllis Childree as Beatrice
 Robert Hatton as Harry
 Phil Jones as God
 Frank Brown as T.V. Announcer

Production Staff

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Technical Directors | Jerry Ellis Fred Stikkel |
| Stage Managers | Brenda Carter Carol Luker |
| Set Construction | Cast & Crew |
| Light & Sound | Michael Burrage Liz Miller |
| Program | Michael Burrage Liz Miller |
| Publicity | Liz Miller |
| Box Office | Jerry Ellis |
| Concessions/Ushers | Jerry Dickson Sandra Dickson Joann Griner Carol Luker Bill McFarlin Dale Meehan Rick Patrick |

Special Thanks

from Theatre Guild Valdosta to the following people for their contributions to this production

Harrison Cooper - FM-96

AN EVENING OF ONE ACTS

JANUARY 1997

Playing a married couple, Phyllis Childree as Beatrice and Robert Hatton as Harry have breakfast with God played by Phil Jones during a scene from 'When God Comes Over For Breakfast, You Don't Burn the Toast.'





Above, Heather Hull, left, as Amy Beth, and Kristy Barton as Amy Joy, as best friends have fun with a beach ball in a scene from 'Life Under Water.'

AN EVENING OF ONE ACTS



Above, Donna Joyner, as Olivia, tells a story about her past reincarnation to Libby, played by Liz Miller, sitting on the floor, during a scene from 'Late Sunday Afternoon, Early Sunday Evening.'

Each year, Theatre Guild Valdosta offers "A Night of One Acts." TGV will perform three one-act plays Friday and Saturday and Jan. 17-18 at the Dosta Playhouse (122 N. Ashley St.).

All three plays are performed each night. The show begins at 8 p.m. each day, and tickets are \$5.

The Guild will present "Late Sunday Afternoon, Early Sunday Evening" by Jean Lenox Toddie, "Life Under Water" by Richard Greenburg and "When God Comes Over for Breakfast, You Don't Burn the Toast" by Gary Apple.

"One of the purposes of one acts is to do things that stretch us as actors, but that also stretch our audiences," said Mary Ann Green, one of the characters in "Life Under Water."

Despite minimalism of the set and the smaller amount of lines and blocking, Ms. Green said just as much intensity goes into the preparation of the plays, if not more.

According to director Debbie Parrish, the first play, "Late Sunday Afternoon, Early Sunday Evening," is a story of coming of age — with a twist.

In the play, Olivia, a very conventional grandmother — who happens to talk to ghosts — decides that life is boring and that she must make a change.

"It's about how it affects her and her granddaughter," said Liz Miller who plays Libby, the granddaughter.

"It's funny, but it also has a message," she said. "It's never too late to find yourself."

According to Ms. Parrish, the play mixes humor with tenderness.

"I think the audience will have a deeper appreciation for the human spirit," Ms. Parrish said. "They'll get a laugh and a cry maybe."

The second play, "Life Under Water," directed by Ricardo Ipina, explores the loneliness of life and the insensitivity of people toward others.

According to Ipina, the play is a reflection of life.

"It shows how some people are," Ipina said. "I believe it's true to life."

Ms. Green plays one of the characters in the second one act and said the structure of the play is also unique.

"In terms of the scenes, it's much like television," she said. "It jumps from one scene to another and sometimes between as many as three scenes at a time."

According to Ipina, the play has some funny moments, but it is definitely not a comedy.

"It's got some poignant moments and some very sad commentary about what we look for in relationships," Ms. Green said.

"Life Under Water" is not recommended for audience members under the age of 13 due to strong language and content.

In the third play, Harry and Beatrice Katsman invite God over for breakfast. In the spirit of the film "Oh God!," the Almighty comes down in very human form for a visit.

"It's just a visit, but every time He comes to people, they want answers," said director Linda Boyett.

Phil Jones has the formidable task of playing God, complete with linen suit and pith helmet.

"It's about if God were to come visit a family," Jones said. "Probably no one would take it seriously, or you wouldn't know whether to believe it or not."

"It's very funny."

The Cast

| | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| Colonel J. C. Kinkaid | Jack Pruden |
| Maureen Kinkaid | Martha Reynolds |
| Martha Ann Sickenger | Pauline Player |
| Mike Tremaine | Fred Stikkel |
| Floyd Kinkaid | Jim Britt |
| Clarence Sickenger | Murray Weed |
| Major Leroy W. Ketchum | Jerry Ellis |
| Cadet Whooper Turnbull | Michael Barr |
| Claudine Hampton | Darlene Caviness |

Time and Place

Summer of 1962 in Bradleyville, Texas.
The den of Floyd Kinkaid's ranch-style home on the outskirts of town.

Act I

Scene 1: A summer afternoon

Scene 2: An hour later

Act II

Scene 1: Four days later

Scene 2: An hour later

Scene 3: Late that night

Production Staff

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Director | Mary Helen Watson |
| Producer | Mary Ann Green |
| Technical Directors | Jerry Ellis Fred Stikkel Bill McFarlin |
| Stage Manager | Joanne Griner |
| Prop Manager | Carol Luker |
| Set Construction | Cast & Crew |
| Costumes | Marge Pruden |
| Light & Sound Technician | Elizabeth Miller Bill McFarlin |
| Program | Elizabeth Miller Michael Burrage |
| Publicity | Elizabeth Miller |
| Box Office | Jerry Ellis |

Special Thanks

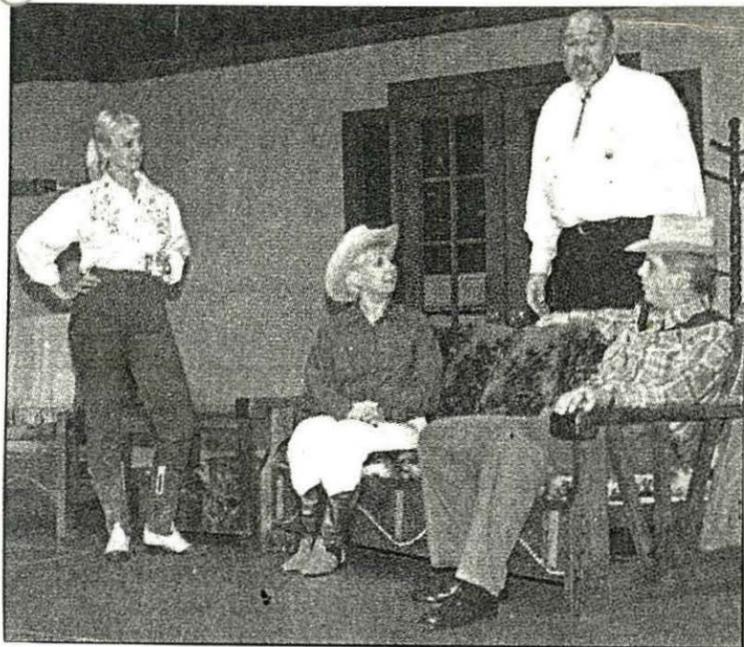
from Theatre Guild Valdosta to the following people for their contributions to this production

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Forrest & Jo Williams | Boot Hill Western Apparel |
| Southern Salvage | Tunison Furniture |
| Ashley House | Silkwood |
| Weeks Decorating Center | Classic Art & Frame |

Also a special thanks to The Associates Financial Services & Mr. Bill Fuqua for granting a wish from our 'wish list'. We deeply appreciate their donation of used office furniture.

THE OLDEST LIVING GRADUATE

FEBRUARY 1997



Theatre Guild presenting 'The Oldest Living Graduate'

By **TIM BUTLER**
Theatre Staff Writer

VALDOSTA — Preston Jones' play, "The Oldest Living Graduate," offers "a slice of life" that Valdostans can appreciate, according to the play's director, Dr. Mary Helen Watson.

Theatre Guild Valdosta will perform "The Oldest Living Graduate" today through Sunday and Feb. 20-22 at the Dosta Playhouse.

Curtain times are 8 p.m. except Sunday and Feb. 22 which are 2:30 p.m. matinees.

"You really get the feeling that these are real people," Dr. Watson said.

The play is set in the small, Southwest Texas town of Bradleyville in 1962.

The lead in the play, played by Jack Pruden, is Col. J.C. Kinkaid, a World War I veteran who, due to age and shell shock, is not always possessed with all his mental faculties, Dr. Watson said.

"The Oldest Living Graduate" is one play in a trilogy about Bradleyville written by Jones.

It is the best known of the trilogy, and characters show up in minor roles in the other two plays.

In the play, Col. Kinkaid is the oldest living graduate of Mirabeau B. Lamar Military Academy, a small institution in Galveston, Texas.

The academy plans to honor the colonel whose son, Floyd, convinces the school's representatives to come out to Bradleyville to meet Col. Kinkaid.

Col. Kinkaid, who is confined to a

wheelchair, lives with Kinkaid and his wife, Maureen.

The Kinkaid family, and the colonel owns a large amount of land. His son, expecting the attendance of loads of military brass at the ceremony, sees it as an opportunity for possible real estate development.

The playwright hails from Southwest Texas which helps make his characters believable, Dr. Watson said.

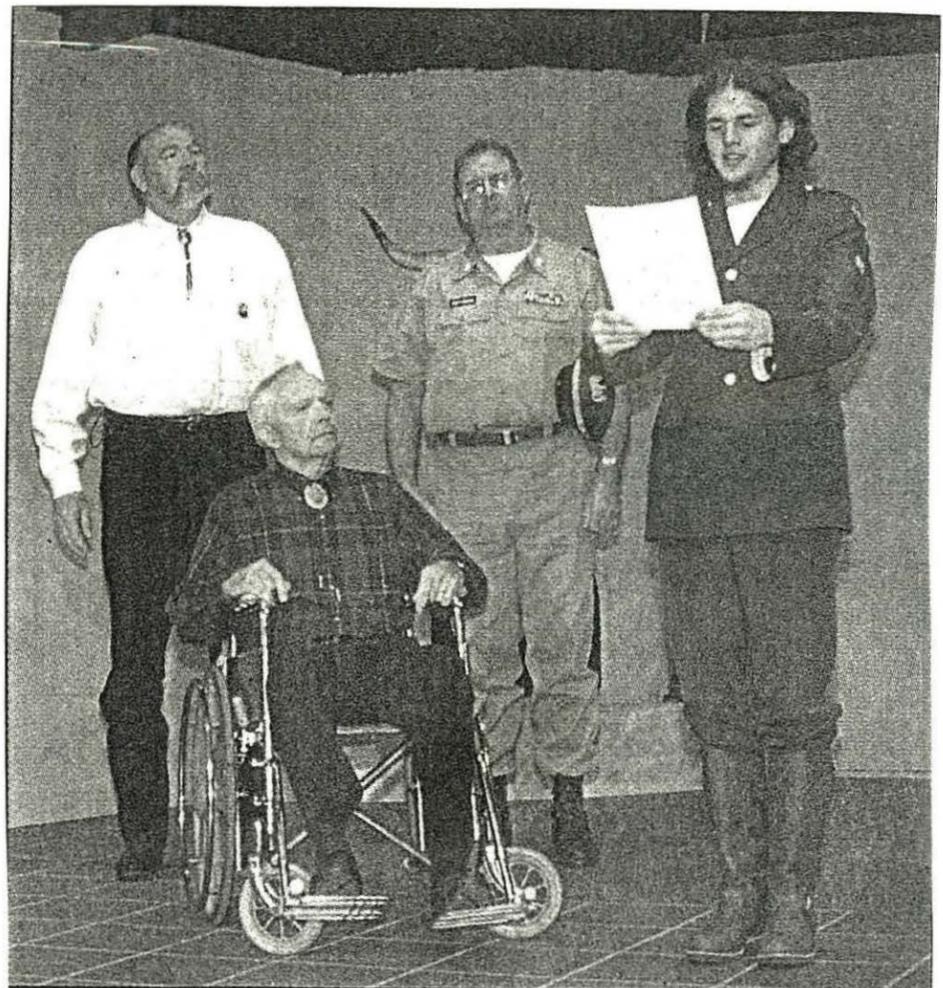
"You see some of the same kinds of interaction," she said. "I think Valdosta is still pretty much a small town, and these

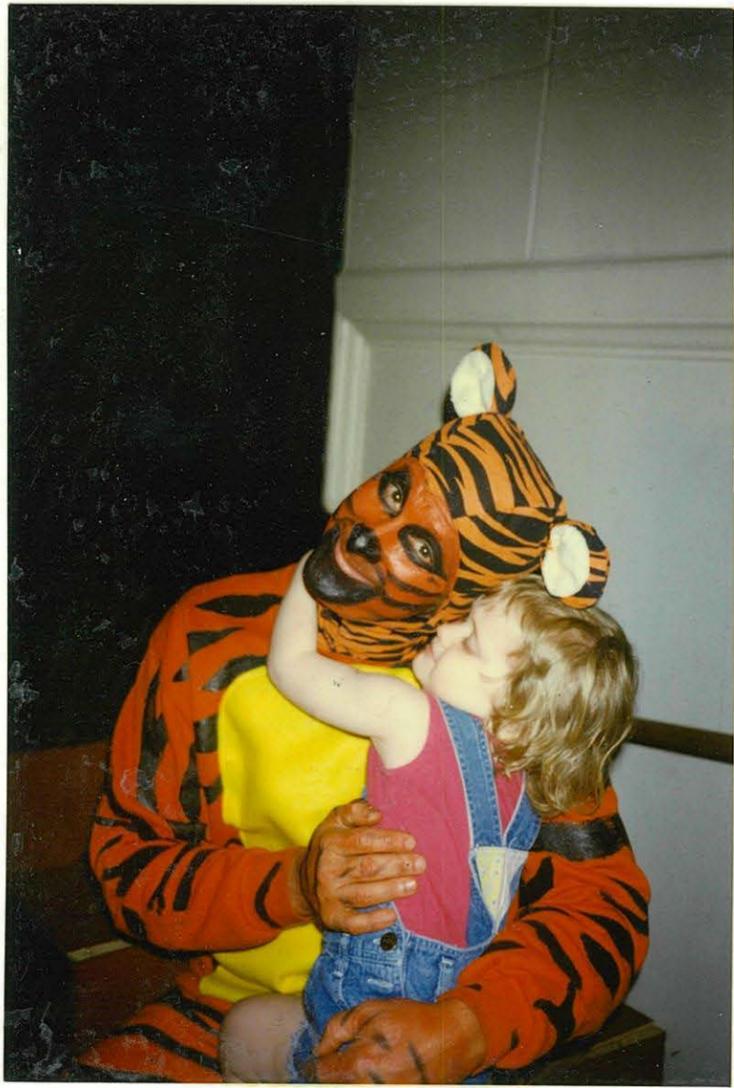
people are pretty much small-town people.

"They accept you for what you are. They are aware of the good and the bad, and even though they rant at each other occasionally, they accept each other for who they are.

"I think you can put these people almost anywhere rural. You can relate to them."

Tickets are \$8 per person and group rates are available. For more information call TGV at 247-8243.





**WINNIE
THE
POOH**

MARCH 1997



The Cast

| | |
|----------------|---------------|
| Corie Bratter | Patty White |
| Paul Bratter | Jeff Fulp |
| Mother Banks | Joanne Griner |
| Victor Velasco | Fred Stikkel |
| Telephone Man | Rick Patrick |
| Delivery Man | John Deming |

Time and Place

The top floor of a brownstone on East 48th Street,
New York City, 1964.

Act One

About 5:30 on a cold February afternoon.

Act Two

Scene 1: Four days later. About 7:00 P.M.

Scene 2: Later that night. About 2 A.M.

Act Three

The following day. About 5:00 P.M.

Production Staff

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Director | Jim Britt |
| Assistant Director & Producer | Linda Boyett |
| Stage Manager | Pauline Player |
| Light & Sound | Darlene Caviness Michael Burrage |
| Set Construction & Costumes | Cast & Crew |
| Props | Phyllis Childree Ken Kinard Tess Hill Phil Jones Ken Kinard Carol Luker |
| Concessions & Ushers | Elizabeth Miller Michael Burrage Elizabeth Miller Jerry Ellis |
| Program | |
| Publicity | |
| Box Office | |

Special Thanks

Eddie Laws Discount Furniture
American Glass
Marjorie Dickerson
Allen Parrish
Laurie Dutton (Artist)
Walt & Della Prettyman
Southern Tile & Carpet

BAREFOOT IN THE PARK

MAY 1997

Valdosta Theatre Guild opens 'Barefoot in the Park' today

By ELIZABETH RANKIN SCOTT
Times Staff Writer

As the Valdosta Theatre Guild presents Neil Simon's "Barefoot in the Park" today through Sunday and May 22-24, Director John Britt doesn't know who's more nervous — he or the actors. The play is Britt's directorial debut.

"This has been like a dream come true for me," Britt said.

He has wanted to direct a full-length play since he joined the Theatre Guild in 1990, acting in numerous plays and serving as assistant director for several others. He directed an one-act play last season.

Britt said "Barefoot in the Park" has been a good place to start directing.

"It's lighthearted and suitable for families," he explained.

The comedy takes place in New York City one February in the early '60s. Newlyweds Corrie and Paul Bratter move into an apartment Corrie has found for them.

Paul is a new lawyer who just won his first case when the couple meets Victor Velasco, one of the other tenants in the building. Velasco is a free spirit, and when he meets Corrie's conservative mother, the comedy takes off.

Problems in Paradise worsened when Paul does not want to go walking through Central Park in 30-degree weather and Corrie accuses him of being a fuddy duddy.

The director said Simon's greatest strength is his vivid characterization.

"There is someone in every Simon play the individual can relate to. You might be reminded of an uncle or

your mother. You feel like you know at least one character," Britt said.

Most of the cast will be familiar to regular theatergoers.

Though "Barefoot" is Patricia White's (Corrie Bratter) first large stage production, she starred in an one-act play last season.

Her on-stage husband, Paul Bratter, is portrayed by Jeff Fulp.

Fulp played "Oscar" in last year's performance of the "Odd Couple," Simon's most famous play.

Victor Velasco is portrayed by Fred Stikkel, best known for his performance as Mike Trumain in "The Oldest Living Graduate" and "Captain" in "Anything Goes."

Jo Ann Griner (Mother) has a credit list a mile long, Britt said. Ms. Griner has been with the guild since its conception in 1989.

Rick Patrick (Telephone Man) is also a long time veteran of the Valdosta stage.

The director is assisted by his crew, comprised of Linda Boyett, assistant director and producer; Pauline Player, stage manager; Darlene Caviness, lights; and Phyllis Childree, prop manager.

Concessions will be manned by Tess Hill and Ken Kinard.

The set was constructed by Bill McFarland, Carol Luker, Jerry Ellis, Michael Burrage, Liz Miller and the cast and crew.

Tickets for "Barefoot in the Park" are available for \$8 by calling 24-STAGE. Groups of 20 or more receive a discount.

All evening shows begin at 8. Sunday matinees begin at 2:30 p.m.

Don't miss 'Barefoot in the Park'

On Thursday, I made my way into Valdosta's downtown district to the historic Dosta Theatre, which showed B-movie Westerns in the 1940's but today is the home of Theatre Guild Valdosta or "TGV," same initials as the French bullet train, to watch their production of Neil Simon's "Barefoot in the Park," the final play of the Guild's 1996-97 season.

Before I get to the play, which was wonderful, I'd like you to walk through the Dosta's neat red swinging theatre doors with me for a moment, past the projecting glass box office and glittering front facade, into a modern, well-conceived playhouse. The formerly gutted interior has been outfitted with stepped seating, banks of lighting and other equipment, the obligatory black dropped ceiling, and a stage that communicates with adjacent make-up rooms and storage space. Together they form a workshop where plays are crafted.

After touring the fine old building and seeing the work TGV has done to this worthwhile property since 1993, I'm glad that the city of Valdosta has made a similar commitment to the entire district with its titanic "Streetscape" project, which will help downtown tenants to save and preserve the distinctiveness of the district.

TGV played "Barefoot in the Park" as deliciously kitsch as Andy Warhol's painting of Campbell's Soup, from the medley of 1960's-era television theme songs they used as an "overture" before the play to the decor, the prize of which was the giant wooden fork and spoon on the wall. Simon probably never meant his Sixties work to become an icon of the decade, but it seems destined to nonetheless.

"Barefoot," like Simon's "California Suite," takes place entirely in a single rented room, in this case a 1964 New York brownstone apartment. The play opens with newlywed bride Corie Bratter (Patty White) pattering around an empty apartment, bright and pert as any sitcom wife.

"I brought a lot of Elizabeth Montgomery from 'Bewitched' into the part," White said, "because she's kind of manipulative but in a sweet way. And also Jane Fonda, who was Corie in the movie. Corie loves fun, but she's a really real character."

The apartment has a long list of shortcomings, most notably a hole in the skylight, that are discovered repeatedly by a variety of people who struggle up the five or six flights of stairs (depending on whether you count the stoop) to arrive, gasping for breath, at the door in the left wall to converse with Corie. First, the telephone man (Rick Patrick), then the delivery man (John Deming), then her serious and practical young husband Paul (Jeff Fulp), fresh out of law school and ready for his first case in the morning.

Corie is artlessly perky as she fends off criticisms of the apartment, slips a negligee over her clothing, and dances an "authentic Cambodian fertility dance" around her husband, who insists on ignoring her and preparing for his case.

"You can just wrap up in a shawl in front of the fire with your law books like Abraham Lincoln," Corie pouts.

"Is that supposed to be funny?" Paul asks.

"No, it was supposed to be nasty. It just came out funny."

An awful lot of lines come out funny in "Barefoot" since Simon wrote a hilarious script and the cast's command of the smooth wisecrack and one-liner is masterful.

An already funny show turns up a notch, however, when Corie's mother, Ethel Banks (Joanne

Griner) staggers in from the stairwell. The stairwell, by the way, serves as a sort of airlock separating the apartment from the rest of the world since each arrival has to be buzzed into the building; then Corie follows their progress up the stairs in shouted conversation. By Ethel's arrival, the stairs were like another character.

Griner, in my opinion, was absolute gold on stage. The most experienced of TGV's many performers, Griner was able to make the audience howl with as little as a glance or nuanced expression. As White and Griner explored the mother-daughter relationship (Corie: "Why don't you travel? You've got the time, the luggage ... all you need are the shots!"), I reflected on the strength of Simon's knowledge of human nature and his ability to spin dialogue.

"You never can tell what people talk about when they're alone," Corie said, but hit me strongly as the playwright discussing his art.

As Ethel headed for the endless stairs, she looked at the newlyweds, then stepped out the door with a dry "Geronimo." The play's final star entered right after, the flamboyant Albanian mountain climber and gourmet, Victor Velasco (Fred Stikkel), polished but penniless, who lives in the attic. Stikkel, in his first major role, played Victor Con brio.

"(Director) Jim (Britt) said I'd be perfect for the part so I auditioned," Stikkel said. "I rented the video and got my character to flow with the others. Working with Joanne (Griner) was a real treat — she's real easy to work with. I had a lot of fun with the role."

Of course, Corie schemes to match up her lonely mother with the romantic foreigner (who the practical Paul dismisses variously as "The Count of Monte Cristo," "The Hungarian Duncan Heinz,"

and "The Birdman of 48th Street") and in doing so, she unwittingly precipitates a series of events that brings each character to a personality crisis.

Corie realizes with a shock that she, like Victor, is the impulsive sort who wants to seize life while Paul, like Ethel, is hopelessly conventional. Corie berates Paul for his stodginess, symbolized by his recent refusal to walk barefoot in the park with her (It was 17 degrees, he protests) and says that he can't even loosen up when drunk; she demands a divorce and orders him out. In the third act, he leaves but returns suitably drunk and feverish from having just walked barefoot in the park, and they make up. It becomes clear that each of the four has been changed by what he has been through, and, having grown more like each other, they are all going to settle into somewhat altered but more stable relationships.

The lights faded with a sobering, repentant Paul on the roof barely hanging on and looking through the hole in the skylight, which is symbolic of marriage, I suppose, where frailty meets hope. But Simon left unclear whether Ethel and Victor ever married so I hurried backstage to ask Stikkel.

"No," he said in his Victor character, "we just date a lot." I suppose, like the ending of "Mrs. Doubtfire," that'll have to do.

PLAY REVIEW



JOHN K. YOUNG



As Corie and Paul Bratter look on, Victor Velasco meets Ethel Banks, the mother played by Joanne Griner, for the first time on a blind date. — Times photo by Paul Leavy

BAREFOOT IN THE PARK