

Spirited Cast Stages

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Saga Of 'Roaring 20's'

By MARY KINDLAND

The razzle-dazzle of the roaring 20's sprang to life last night when a spirited cast of relative newcomers sparked the opening performance of Little Theater's current production, "The Show-Off."

James C. Beal Jr., a king size bundle of talent wrapped in a raccoon coat and topped with a straw hat, set a lively pace for the delightful cornball humor of the 3-act comedy.

Beal masterfully combined the hilarious mannerisms and styles of W. C. Fields and Jackie Gleason to buffoon his way through the role of Aubrey Piper, a flamboyant show-off. In his initial LT appearance, Beal gave a memorable performance which drew repeated bursts of laughter and applause from appreciative first nighters.

Special plaudits go to Grace Anne Augesberger, who on less than two weeks notice, assumed the demanding role of Mrs. Fisher, turning in an outstanding performance. It is doubtful a person of lesser acting prowess could have carried out the assignment as ably as Mrs. Augesberger, who was on-stage most of the time.

Stunning touches of beauty were provided in the hip and head swinging appearances of Linda Johnson and Debbie Nowell, as Clara and Amy. Unusually fine attention to makeup, hair arrangement and wardrobe for the pair gave a feeling of authenticity to the time period.

Both displayed good stage presence with Miss Nowell coming through with an energetic rendition of the Charleston.

Donald Traynor injected strong personality into the supporting role as Mr. Fisher, getting maximum effect. He bore the signs of an experienced performer, adding handsomely to the humor of the generation gap, a la 1925.

William Bordeaux and Michael Haller never missed a cue in the roles of Joe and Frank Hyland, falling easily into the spirit of the play. Both turned in fine performances.

Lesser character parts of Gil and Mr. Rogers were in the capable hands of Harry Robie and Michael Buck, a pair of potential scene stealers, who got the most out of their brief, but effective appearances.

Much credit goes to Michael Bavar, director, who quickly es-

tablished an intimacy between the players and the audience by utilizing the large apron of the LT stage, creating a theater-in-the-round.

Authentic, toe tapping background music enhanced the time effect, well pronounced by period furniture, complete with doilies and a gramophone. The setting was much like a trip back to grandma's house in the pre-depression days.

The unexpected departure from the usual cast lineup for a bow, ended the rollicking play on a high note in keeping with the stage tradition of "leave while they're laughing."

"The Show-Off" is one of those light vein plays, so strong in characterization and few notice the weak plot. A tip of the hat to Mr. Bavar and his fine cast for a delightful evening of family-type entertainment.

Performances will be repeated at 8:30 tonight, and Tuesday through Sunday at the