

The Last Dress Rehearsal--A Review

by Mary Winsky

Well, the Heritage Hunt Little Theater's recent success, *The Last Dress Rehearsal*, may have held that clever title, but every person in its enthusiastic audiences certainly hopes it isn't the last treat this talented organization offers this lucky community. The production's author and director, John Gatt, a.k.a.. the 2000 year old man, certainly has more than enough ability and creativity to go on and on. And his hard-working producer, Bets Knepley, a.k.a. Mae West, the Little Theater's founder, obviously isn't running out of steam either.

What a crew they rallied. Managers, lighting and sound, scenery, photographer, programs, prompter, props, publicity, tickets and reservations, videographer and greeters worked in harmony to make it all come together. Their cooperative and collective expertise was impressive.

But of course we were especially impressed by the front-and-center performances of the cast, variety acts and accompanists.

"Entertaining!" "Incredible talent!" "Great sports!" were the comments I heard at meetings and in the fitness center as I awaited my own enjoyment of the show's final night. Even so, I was unprepared for its impact.

The musicians, singers, actors and dancers all outdid themselves and reminded us all of the incredible abundance of this community. We sang along in our heads and hearts to old favorites, watched with respect the memorized moves, timing and precision, listened to the well-delivered lines and plot, and felt the vicarious thrill of pride in our friends and neighbors.

Whether we swooned over the big name "hunk" of an MC, "woo wooed" with the Chattanooga Choo Choo" or cheered "Let's go on with the show!" with Ethel, we loved how each performer "gave everything away." How inspiring to be lifted by the shoulder-to-shoulder voices of stout hearted men, clap and tap to the Picnic Polka, then appreciate a "Beautiful Morning" in "Oklahoma." And what could be more good-natured than the gentle joshing of Raymond J. Neanderthal? Great comic relief for every homeowner. Pure enjoyment followed in the black and white "shadow" tap dancers, the lusty Mae West and lovely Lida Rose who made us all dream again. The seductive sax invited ballroom dancers forward. Then the irresistible Sonny and Cher really "got" us (Babe) just before the whole

joyful cast and national nostalgia brought us to our feet for the grand finale. Fantastic.

The Last Dress Rehearsal truly was “senior theater at its best.” Its memories and good feelings will last and last—at least until the next Heritage Hunt Little Theater production. Can’t wait!