

## **Unique play very funny**

**Quad City Times – July 19, 2002 - by Ruby Nancy**

"Scapin" is another one of those shows that may suffer in ticket sales because it's a play that most people haven't heard of, but that would be a real shame. This hilarious play may be one of the funniest shows of the year.

Nearly improv, nearly slapstick, always laugh-out-loud funny, "Scapin" offers audiences the rare chance to see a play in the tradition of commedia dell'arte, a Chaplin-esque, clownish style of theater from 1600s Europe. But don't let the big words turn you off, because this broad, physical comedy requires no deep thoughts.

Based on Moliere's original French text, this version is in English and is adapted by Bill Irwin and Mark O'Donnell. In keeping with the commedia tradition, there are current and location-specific references as well — and they really add to the fun of this show. The setup is simple: two pair of young lovers are each being kept apart by grumpy old fathers. Servants — all much brighter than their employers — scheme to let the kids live happily ever after.

Casey Campbell is a natural in the title role. His Scapin is both blase and cheeky — the perfect scamp — and he bounds across and around the small stage with a lively, infectious energy. Concerned mostly with himself, Campbell's Scapin manages to turn the most basic of favors for a friend to his advantage. Clad in an ensemble that includes outrageously adorable patchwork pants, Campbell turns the most ridiculous lines and manic of antics into sublime and riotous humor. At the center of all the action without overshadowing the ensemble players, he turns in fabulous work here.

As Sylvestre, the "sidekick servant," Scott Hoyt is absolutely fantastic. The perfect foil for Scapin's trickster role, Sylvestre is considerably less blessed with brains, but compensates with earnest dedication to a task that is unparalleled. Hoyt's performance is a delightful mix of charades, impressions, sight gags and more.

Talented performers in the ensemble keep things going through a host of amazing coincidences and wonderfully comic setups. Dana Moss-Peterson is great as Octave, a daft and delicate would-be Romeo, and Larry Lord is particularly amusing as the thrifty, gullible Geronte. As lady's maid Nerine, Emmalee Moffitt turns in a very funny performance that is a treat to watch. Scott Nelson's work as Leander, another thickheaded would-be lover, is also great. Some other performers aren't as good or as consistent, but all of them will make you laugh at least once.

A colorful and sometimes simply odd collection of costumes is in keeping with the circus-like setting for "Scapin" and the contributions of George (the show's organist, played by Wayne Hulting) add to the big-tent atmosphere.

Director/technical director/set designer Jennifer Kingry obviously had her hands full with this show, and — with another winner on her hands — proves she is completely up to the task.

Don't miss the chance to see a really great show — this is it.

## **"Scapin" hilarious adaptation**

**Argus/Dispatch – July 18, 2002 - by Julie Jensen**

The Richmond Hill Players drag Moliere kicking and screaming hilariously into the 21st century with "Scapin" at the Barn Theater in Geneseo.

Jennifer Kingry directs this adaptation by Bill Irwin and Mark O'Donnell, appending hilarious local references like the description of "a dingy little bar -- I think it was called the Deck" and "You are the toughest guy around because you were raised on the mean streets of Silvis."

Casey Campbell, Bettendorf, plays the title character, a rascally Harlequin, and he expends enough energy to drop five pounds per performance. His facial expressions and his body language are equally eloquent.

Dana Moss-Peterson pulls out all the stops as Octave, the young romantic being forced into an unwanted marriage by his father. Unbeknownst to dear, old dad, he's already married.

His bride is Hyacinth, played by Carol Roemer, Geneseo, as a southern belle type who gives her emotions free rein.

Scott Hoyt, Rock Island, is a stitch as Sylvestre, Octave's servant. He helps Scapin's schemes by assuming a variety of personas with disguises.

Michael Miller, Moline, plays Argante, Octave's father, a crusty old soul who stomps around with a cane, and Larry Lord, Geneseo, is Geronte, Scapin's master, who is easily scammed by that rascal. He also has other relationships that show up during the action under the heading, "unbelievable coincidence."

Kari Skiles, Geneseo, is Zerbinette, a colorful creature given to bursts of uproarious laughter.

Scott Nelson, Geneseo, is Leander, Geronte's son, who is in love with Zerbinette, the Gypsy siren. He plays the role well.

Emmalee Moffitt, Rapids City, is Nerine, Zerbinette's duenna, and she gives Scapin a run for the money. Michael Skiles and Taylor Giebel cover the roles of Gendarmes, messengers and porters with style. French style? Who knows? The program says the setting is "no particular time, no particular place. Somewhere vaguely French -- or maybe Italian, possibly Portuguese."

That's why Wayne Hulting can set the stage musically by playing "Tonight," "Everything's Coming Up Roses," and "Give My Regards to Broadway" on the organ moved into the barn for the show.

The set is simple -- two semi-circular benches and the Argante and Geronte houses with high windows -- and it works well.

At one point Scapin enters disguised as a season ticket holder and plunks "herself" down in the first row. Geronte is hidden in a large canvas bag by Scapin, who then pretends to be other assailants, clobbering him with a length of hose. He even invites members of the audience to get in a few licks, and the youngsters who participated gave it their all.

Scapin compliments Sylvestre on his acting ability, telling him he could get work at the Richmond Hill Theater. When Sylvestre asks, "How's the pay?" The answer is "not good." Later, he bursts onstage brandishing an Oscar saying, "You liked me! You really liked me!"

Octave says he will love Hyacinth "now and forever -- and then on for awhile." Sylvestre announces, "Something horrible has happened to Scapin. Michelangelo dropped a hammer on his head in the Sistine Chapel." He is carried in on a litter, and as the denouement hovers, suddenly you'll wonder if it's August and Don Wooten is running this show.

The Keystone Kops chase is on, and it's at full speed, including Hyacinth on a unicycle at one point. It's a really wild curtain call.

The show is a lot of laughs, and it's participatory for many members of the audience.