

## Will and Grace notes

River Cities Reader - July 14, 2010 - by Thom White

One of Joe DePauw's smartest directorial choices for the Richmond Hill Barn Theatre's *A Turn for the Nurse* was to avoid camp. His cast doesn't play the crime farce for laughs and, as a result, may get more of them than they otherwise might've; to be sure, Saturday's audience was offering up laughter aplenty throughout the performance.

The comedy opens with aged millionaire Oliver Stratton (Dave Rash) lovelorn, and not knowing the whereabouts (or even the name) of his beloved. He decides to set sail for, and live a monk's life in, Tibet, a plan that has his son (Cory Holbrook), nephew (Alex Klimkewicz), nephew's *girlfriend* (Cara DeMarlie), lawyer (Jackie Patterson), and nurse (Molly McLaughlin) scrambling to be named in his will before he leaves. Yet while they all hope to be *willed* Oliver's money, his butler (Archie Williams) and maid (Faith Adams) are trying to steal it outright from the man's hidden safe.

Casting Rash was another of DePauw's smart choices. The character of Oliver Stratton requires a significant suspension of disbelief, as he's unaware of things said and done right in front of him. Rash, however, makes great use of dumbfounded and puzzled looks - making it easier to believe his Oliver is truly oblivious to the events around him - and the actor's strong stage presence commands your attention as he effectively delivers one laugh-worthy line after another.

DeMarlie is equally confident, both as an actress and a character. Her Sylvia is a strong-willed, crass woman, and the seemingly uninhibited DeMarlie attacks the role with gusto, delivering a performance made memorable by her sarcastic line deliveries and (when it's required) well-played feigned sincerity.

Several others are equally noteworthy. Isaac Ritter is especially funny while speaking with a higher-pitched, Asian-accented voice as the Tibetan monk Wu Chang, and when offering a dumb, drunken look during the show's dinner scene. Klimkewicz's Derek manages to come across as both charming *and* slimy. And Holbrook's George is convincingly unpretentious, even as he's plotting to get his father's money. His performance made me want to root for George as he planned to do harm, thinking he must be doing so with harmless motives.

*A Turn for the Nurse* is not without its weaknesses, chief among them some awkward staging. A few scenes require Adams' Jane to overhear conversations and misinterpret them as being directed toward her; in each instance, however, she's positioned away from the action in a corner of the stage, making it difficult to believe she'd be confused by what's being said. And while Lynn Monge is adorable in her role as Cora Van Beck, a crusader for the temperance movement, her use of pauses - both before delivering her lines and during them - slows the pace of the show significantly.

Monge's costume, however, is the best of the bunch. Overall, costume designer Jean Melillo's selections are appropriate, but the feather boa and hat she's outfitted Monge with actually *add* to her character, offering a physical representation of this woman's flighty, socially awkward nature.

Playwright Rick Abbott's script has its fair share of groan-worthy jokes. Yet rather than halfhearted laughter, DePauw's *A Turn for the Nurse* elicits hearty guffaws, primarily because the actors allow themselves to be the butts of the jokes rather than being *in on* the jokes. It's a wise choice. Hamming it up would just dumb this show down.

## 'Nurse' takes some amusing turns

Argus-Dispatch - July 14, 2010 - By Julie Jensen

The current play at the Richmond Hill Barn in Geneseo, "A Turn for the Nurse" by Rick Abbot, is full of wild action. Although it seems overly long, last Friday night's audience was amused all the way.

Dave Rash plays Oliver Stratton, who has lost the love of his life and therefore plans to go to Tibet and become a monk, leaving his fortune to his nurse, Peggy. This causes the entire household to try to get the will changed in their favor.

Director Joe DePauw paces the show well.

In the opening scene Derek Stratton (Alex Klimkewicz), Oliver's nephew, and Sylvia Crane (Cara DeMarlie), his love, are kissing on the couch.

Cory Holbrook plays George Stratton, Oliver's son, and Molly McLaughlin is his nurse, Peggy Brent. She's pretty dressed up for a nurse.

The lawyer who wrote the will, J.D. Culver (Jackie Patterson), turns out to be a real villainess. Cora Van Beck, the temperance lady whose identity comes as a surprise, is played by Lynn Monge. Archie Williams is the butler, Herbert Sanders, who tries everything to open a safe hidden behind a picture on the wall.

Faith Adams is Jane Johnson, the maid who is afraid of the cook, and Isaac Ritter is Wu Chang, who is supposed to escort Oliver to Tibet. Wu Chang compares Baked Alaska to life. He gets drunk, seemingly on water, but it's really gin.

The action includes fisticuffs, as well as \$10,000 bills falling from the ceiling.

## **Funny 'Nurse' overstays welcome**

Quad-City Times - July 15, 2010- David Burke

The Richmond Hill Players' "A Turn For the Nurse" provides us with some solid laughs, deliciously nasty characters and excellent performances.

Unfortunately, it also lasts far longer than it should, clocking in at two hours and 45 minutes, leaving me wondering whether the cast and director Joseph DePauw couldn't have taken a whack at editing the show down.

The premise is promising, with tycoon Oliver Stratton (Dave Rash) ready to join a recruiter (Isaac Ritter) for the Dalai Lama, leaving his \$40 million to his nurse (Molly McLaughlin), and upsetting his son (Cory Holbrook), nephew (Alex Klimewicz) and the nephew's clandestine girlfriend (Cara DeMarlie). A lawyer (Jackie Patterson) is involved, and the ensuing action even brings on a temperance crusader (Lynn Monge). A butler (Archie Williams) and maid (Faith Adams), meanwhile, are attempting major theft while only feet away from family members contemplating smaller crimes.

At their best, each of the characters is equally backstabbing and oblivious, manipulative and clueless, and at times it plays out along the lines of the TV series "Arrested Development." But Rick Abbot's script has the cast circling the same material several times, and many cast members were guilty of line flubs and lulls in the action on opening night.

If it's an indication, audience members on opening night were more interested in the large bug crawling on Klimkewicz's white sportcoat than they were in what was being said onstage.

Many in the cast deserve a better showcase. Rash is a Richmond Hill legend, and he tries to provide a solid foundation. DeMarlie delivers her lines naturally; Patterson, Adams and Williams do well with what they're given, and I still haven't seen a role best-suited for the talents of McLaughlin.

There are some laughs in the show, but it takes too long in getting to them.

## **Richmond Hill takes 'A Turn for the Nurse.'**

Argus-Dispatch - July 7, 2010 - by Claudia Loucks

Alex Klimkewicz is a reserved guy, but you wouldn't know it from his role as the scheming nephew of an aging millionaire in the upcoming Richmond Hill Players production of 'A Turn for the Nurse.' The Rick Abbott comedy opens tonight under the direction of Joe DePauw, Geneseo.

Mr. Klimkewicz, of Kewanee, is cast as Derek Stratton, who is vying to win his uncle's inheritance and will do anything for the money, including embarrassing and backstabbing his fellow conspirators.

"It's a hilariously over-the-top farce with multilayered jokes, dense wordplay and amusing physical antics," he said. "I believe there is something enjoyable in store for any person, young or old."

He said his character lets him become someone he normally wouldn't dream of being. "I love doing theater because I am a very reserved sort of person," he said. "Theater is a great outlet for releasing pent-up energy, and I'm driven by the connection and rapport I can build with an audience."

He said there is no greater high than when all actors "click" and are able to make a group of people roar with laughter with just a goofy look or snappy remarks. "It can be hard work, but it's an endless amount of fun."

Mr. Klimkewicz sometimes uses his theater background in the classroom. He moved to South Korea in 2007 to become an English teacher at a private academy in Guri, a suburb east of Seoul. He plans to return in August.

He likes teaching in Korea, he said, because the students there keep him "on his toes. You can't take for granted the fact that you are teaching them in what is their second language."

He said some idioms and expressions are difficult to relate to the students because of the culture barrier. "Sometimes it's so much easier to demonstrate and act things than simply define what a new word means," he said.

"Overall, teaching in a foreign country is a very rewarding experience because not only am I imparting my knowledge as a teacher, but I'm constantly learning new things myself."

Growing up in Kewanee, Mr. Klimkewicz attended Wethersfield schools. He was involved in theater in high school and at Eureka College, where he majored in English with a minor in theater. He was cast in more than a dozen college productions and had a hand in just about every theatrical discipline, from set construction, sound, lights and stage managing to acting and directing.

Favorite roles were Petruchio in "The Taming of the Shrew" and the younger brother in "Table Settings," for which Mr. Klimkewicz received an Irene Ryan acting-scholarship nomination from the Kenecy Center American College Theatre Festival.

As much as he enjoys acting, Mr. Klimkewicz said, he enjoys directing even more. One favorite show was "The Somewhat True Tale of Robin Hood," which he directed for Tazwood Community Theater at Eureka's Pritchard Theater.

"It was a wild time, directing 20 children in a comedy based from the story of Robin Hood," he said. From that experience, he realized he had the ability to work with children. It's why he chose to become a teacher after graduating.

When he came home from Korea for a few months in 2008, he discovered the Richmond Hill Players and landed parts in "Almost, Maine," and "Laughing Stock."

"I appreciated the outlet to do something theatrical and loved the opportunity to meet such a close-knit group of actors," he said. "The Barn itself is a lovely, intimate setting that I think many theater-goers find unique. "I love the Barn, and I hope to continue to act there or possibly direct again in the future, when I finally settle down for good."