

Mother Goose review

Children scream with joy



ROMANCE IN TIPPETY WITCHET

Michael Macdonald as Colin romances Melissa Bell as Jill during Georgetown Little Theatre's Christmas production, "Mother Goose". The show ran for five performances last week in Sacre Coeur Hall.

(Herald photo)

By PAUL DORSEY
Herald Editor
They were screaming at the stage.

Standing on their chairs, they booed and hissed at the actors like an Iranian mob confronting the American ambassador. A five-year old demanded the actor's death from the back row, while his comrades everywhere howled for justice.

Was the Georgetown Little Theatre's "Mother Goose" all that bad? Of course not; but some of the characters were very nasty indeed.

Both Ashley Windsor, as Demon Discontent, and Derek Joynt, as Squire Silas O'Sovile, were so mean the kids at their Sunday matinee couldn't stand it. They howled whenever these two appeared onstage to conspire and plot amid loud asides.

Such is the nature of the traditional Christmas pantomime, which this writer and, no doubt, many others are delighted to see becoming an annual event for the GLT. Audience participation, as opposed to passive enjoyment, is a necessity, as are ribald humor, slapstick visuals, localized jokes, actors in drag and an extremely convoluted interpretation of some antique fairy tale.

Like last year's "Cinderella", the GLT's adaptation of "Mother Goose" - actually based on the story of the goose that laid the golden eggs - worked well, as capacity audiences for all five performances will testify.

GLT NUCLEUS
Directing this year's pantomime was Ron Hunt, one member of the GLT nucleus,

mostly expatriate Britons, which not only recaptures the essence of traditional English pantomime but brings plenty of professionalism to other plays tackled by the GLT each year, both dramatic and farcical.

As well as putting in a brief appearance himself as Goose-got III, Mr. Hunt did his directing job well by winding up the actors until every appropriate scene ran amuck with chaotic humor.

Another GLT veteran, Ron Hill, was nothing short of amazing as Mother Goose herself, the financially-fretting but invariably sweet matriarch to a family of human "goslings" which included the young but experienced Melissa Bell as Jill, Bill Marchant as Jack and Michelle Rowe as Brownie.

These three young actors, as well as those forming a small chorus of villagers and courtiers, represent a growing repertoire company of future stars whose talents grace both GLT and high school stages throughout the year. Georgetown has much here to anticipate and enjoy and it's easy to consider that one or two

among them could well make the big-time on a much grander scale.

Meanwhile, back in the little village of Tippety Witchet, the mother-daughter team of Pat and Nicola Joynt were also putting on an outstanding performance as the "devious duo", Willy and Nilly. If pace and levity ever sagged during the play - and there were several minor occasions - then Willy and Nilly were guaranteed to pick it up again and run with the ball.

FEATHER COATING
Also a delight were Marie Cleaton as Priscilla, the 24-karat goose who made her feelings so well known despite being coated with feathers and having her arms bound behind her as wings throughout the play, and Michael Medonald as Colin, the "handsome,

young prince"-type who injects the action with romance and heroism.

Stage right and stage left, respectively, were reserved for the aforementioned Demon Discontent, a flame-tossing red devil whose ambition to help the Squire cook Mother Goose's goose is always accompanied by loud thunder and horrified audience reactions, and for Fairy Tranquilheart, the good princess who foils Demon's conspiracies as well as his nastiness.

To Ashley Windsor's Demon, Val Stoddart portrayed a splendidly magical spirit who combines forces with Priscilla to save the day.

Of Derek Joynt in the Squire's role, not enough can be said. Horribly vile and menacing, the Squire interacted with his audience to

maximize on their identification with "the good guys" and to ensure his eventual demise would meet with their approval.

It did, and so did the play, the acting, the songs and accompaniment and the wonderful set designed by Ron Hunt and built by Les Heed, Jack Ferguson, Frank Holland and Paul Beene.

Others in the noteworthy cast were Harry Van Spronsen as the Landlord Poppelwick, and in the chorus, Hilda Van Spronsen, Maureen McGowan, Cathy McGowan, Amy Johnson and Brenda Archer.

Co-producers were Jo Heed and Joyce Holland, and stage manager was Bev Nicholas, assisted by Ewid Williams.

The GLT's next production, "Separate Tables", debuts in February.

Behind the scenes

Stage manager loves work despite backstage confusion

By PAUL SARGENT
Herald Special

All too often when a play is presented, the people who spend time and energy to make the show run smoothly are left out of the spotlight.

Actors and actresses achieve stardom and fame, while the men and women behind the scenes retain their relative anonymity. The performers are the focus of any production, of course, but they are only a small part of what really happens during the production of a play.

Such was the case during the GLT's weekend production of "Mother Goose". The acting was good and the performances by all were up to the usual high standards, but what the audience didn't see was the performance put on backstage by production personnel.

In a space no larger than a small corridor, and with as many as 17 actors and actresses making things even more congested, the crew made everything from scene changes to wardrobe changes run smoothly and efficiently. The relaxed performances were aided by well-planned and quickly executed changes. Generally, things went very

well, but at times, chaos reigned. A giant-sized envelope which had been left offstage was found piled behind other props and costumes, offstage right. Little of this was known, of course, to an audience wrapped up in stage happenings.

For "Mother Goose", stage manager Bev Nicholas was responsible for everything from lighting to sound. He was the one who gave actors the cue to go on stage, the crew to put on the house lights, and the sound man to start playing the national anthem at the beginning of the show.

Mr. Nicholas carried tremendous responsibilities and carried them well, managing the entire show without a hitch. Mr. Nicholas worked in conjunction with the assistant stage manager, who was wired to him through headphones.

LOVES THE JOB
"I love the theatre," Mr. Nicholas told the Herald when asked about the difficulties of his job. "I've been associated with it for 30 years. It doesn't matter if I'm onstage or managing a show; it's a delight for me."

The really fascinating thing about backstage action for an

outside observer is the amount of room the crew has to work with. Stage facilities are small, but the crew made do with what was available to them.

"It does get crowded at times," co-producer Jo Heed admitted.

Slick organization made the confusion and congestion a much smaller problem.

In the final summation, without the hard work of the people backstage, the show couldn't go on. Actors would be helpless without the efforts of the "little people".

Special mention should be given to all the production staff and all those responsible for the smooth running of the play, which turned out to be a delight for kids of all ages.

Hats off to the stars who seldom, if ever, see the spotlight.

Set Decor - Linda Roe, Sonya Bell, Dianne Lightowler. Lighting - Tom Johnson, Jeff Goebel. Sound - Mike Edwards, Mike Jackson.

Properties - Edna Ferguson, Pat Johnson, Robert Ferguson. Special Effects - Les Heed, Tom Johnson, Dianne Lightowler. Costumes - Greta Lee, Marie Cleaton, Val Stoddart, Sonya Bell, Yvonne Kathwaroon.

Make Up - Linda Roe, Mary Goebel, Iva McConnell, Jennifer Jackson, Maureen McGowan, Linda Tyrell, Vera Macdonald. Script Asst. - Lorraine Willson. Plantist - Flora Macdonald. Photographer - Gerry Eggleton. Front of House - Greta Lee, Margaret Eggleton, Mary Rae Main, John Roe.

Refreshments - Peggy Arcuri and members of Little Theatre. Ushers - Members of Little Theatre.

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