

Poor direction in Mink play

The fur didn't fly quite as thick and fast as it might have done at the Music Hall in Uxbridge last week. Peter Coke's sequel to *A Breath of Spring*, the light comedy *Midsummer Mink*, needs a fast pace and the broad style of acting that brings out the dotti-ness of its characters if it is to be really funny.

Through no fault of their own Uxbridge Players' production lacked both. In its obvious zeal for improvement, observed over the past couple of seasons, the group availed itself of a Theatre Ontario



THEATRE IN REVIEW

Elizabeth Wyatt

grant to hire professional director Leonard Hosios.

Unfortunately, he taught them nothing about pace and reaction between characters. And their

own Monica Briggs (*I'll be Back Before Midnight, Play On*) could teach him a thing or two about staging, comic business and attention to detail.

Good acting level

But Hosios achieved a good general level of acting from players of varying experience and his casting couldn't be bettered. Every one of the 11 actors looked born for his or her role.

And fun roles they are. A group of over-the-hill English eccentrics, unsuccessfully engaged in charitable good works, accidentally come into possession of a "hot" fur.

Their philanthropy takes a new — and wildly successful — twist when they become fences to a gang of fur thieves. Latter day Robin Hoods, they give their ill-gotten gains to the poor.

Dorothy Needham as Lady Alice Miller and Gladys Stephens as the timid, fluttery spinster Elizabeth Hatfield were excellent. They know how to play comedy, with their energy, facial mobility and good, brisk, well-timed delivery.

Pauline Prentice (who should have been made up to look at least 20 years older) had a nice feel for the character of the aging, oh-so-dramatic actress and made a good stab at the several accents she had to assume.

Young lovers

David Reid, although a touch laid-back for the blustery, simple-minded Brigadier, certainly knows his way around a stage. And the lively Edie Kwade (the maid) and Jonathan Corbett (the policeman) both had some nice moments as the young lovers.

Monica Briggs could have put more grandeur into her Dame Beatrice Appleby. She was a tad tentative in her approach, but gained in confidence as the pace picked up toward the end.

Gerry Hegarty produced a wonderful Irish accent for the hapless thief Michael Hogan and he was relaxed and confident. But his performance, like most, was lacking that manic energy the play cries out for.

Mervyn Thomson, Barb Brooks and Liz Larter all carried off with aplomb the difficult task of making their presence felt in short, one-scene performances. Thomson, in particular, played the furrier courier with authority and comic flair.

Brooks also did a fine job in coordinating the costumes. Like Dorothy Partridge's set, they were attractive and nicely detailed.

Director blamed

If the odd one jarred (like Lady Alice's peach number) and the set didn't quite achieve the look of faded elegance of the drawing room of a Dame of the British Empire, the blame rests squarely with director Hosios.

He was technically careless. He allowed the set to be overlit, with light spilling out into the audience — surely disconcerting for the actors. Nor was the incidental music in harmony with the play's mood. Rather than light and sparkly with a hint of mischief, it was rather atonal and sombre.

Perhaps these flaws would not have seriously affected the audience's enjoyment of the production. But when the Uxbridge Players care enough to hire a professional, it's a crying shame to see them ill-served.



Violin concert

Martin Beaver, winner of two recent international awards, will perform under the direction of Clifford Poole with York Symphony Orchestra at Markham Theatre Fri. May 6 at 8:30 p.m. (He'll also perform Sat. May 7 at Aurora High School). Both concerts are sponsored by Cedarland Properties Limited. Tickets are available in Markham at Markham Theatre at 479-0201.

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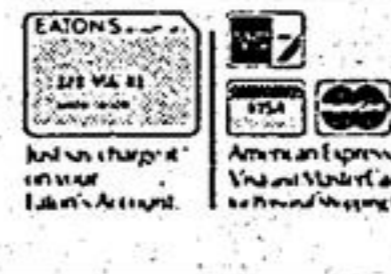
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