THE LAKELAND PLAYERS

"GREISAMER DOES IT AGAIN-BETTER-BEST"

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The Lakeland Players presentation of Thornton Wilder's 'Our Town' raised the stock of this group to new highs. Over 300 people witnessed and experienced a 'happening". It would be difficult to see this production and not be touched by it. Wilder's play is a paradox, an intricate yet simple, amusing yet sobering theatrical piece.

As stage manager, (Ron Murphy) sets the scene, the audience's ear is being tuned to the poetic and simple language of rural America. Murphy carried his multifaceted role with the nonchalance of a small town spokesman. His gentle New England accent gave the audience the feeling that he genuinely knew this town

The performers hit every high-light of humour in the first act with the gentle pathos which occurs in everyday life. The breakfast scenes in the Gibbs and Webb households evoked memories of similar scenes from everyone's child-hood or parenthood. The audience was transported back in time to those happy yet confusing days of "growing up". We received the warmth of these characters and we gave back the nodding, chuckling laughter that said, "yes, that's the way it was".

Mrs. Webb (Carolyn Boyce) showed us her joy at being a wife and mother yet, even while busy with everyday chores, her love for her family was always obvious.

Mr. Webb, (Ross Patterson) talking of and to his daughter, was so genuine in affection that we truly believed in this relationship. Likewise Dr. Gibbs, (Murray Boyce) in lecturing his son, George, and later trying to understand him, must have stirred memories of many in the audience.

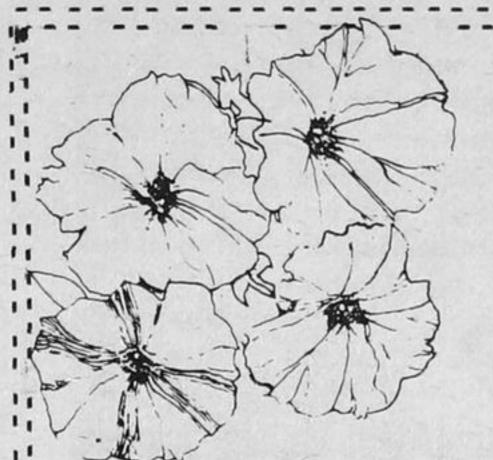
The growing love between Emily and George was subtly directed and we felt for the young man as he struggled to get "his girl"

Lorraine Porter and Bob Ashton, portraying Emily and George, must be congratulated for their superb performances throughout the play. The drug store scene, a difficult one to perform as very little movement is available, was skillfully handled and the feelings of embarrassment, indecision, humour and joy were relayed to the audience through subtle nuances of voice and eye and the total interaction of the actors.

The wedding was beautifully staged and the emotional outburst between George and his mother (Bev Patterson) and the tender meeting of Emily and her father made us feel as if we were eavesdropping on a very private scene. The chattering wedding guests sounded so typical that the audience felt they were also invited guests. This scene was so well conceived that several in the audience almost stood up as the strains of the Wedding March began.

The audience was carefully prepared by the stage manager's introduction to the final scene. With quiet solemnity, we witnessed the funeral of Emily, again experiencing remembrances of our own personal losses. Emily joins those who have died before her in an insightful exchange about the pain of leaving life.

Wilder's words and intent were exquisitely delivered in the heart-rending, emotional portrayal of Emily by Mrs. Porter. Her attempts to relive her life and touch her mother from the grave were, to say the least, deeply poignant.



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Mrs. Gibbs, (Bev Patterson) delivered her meaningful lines with quiet power and truth. The stage manager's final speech delivers Wilder's profound, yet simple statement, that the dying gives significance to the living and life goes on. The play reminds us to treasure ordinary life and live it to the full and the message was delivered fault-lessly on this occasion.

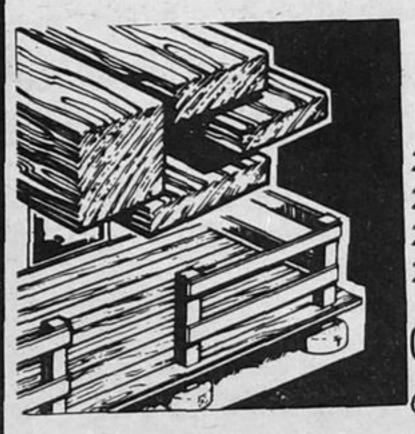
While several specific actors have been mentioned, commendations are due to all the participants as each character is as important as the next in bringing the total impact to this quiet, yet powerful play. Just as in real life, our daily contacts are numerous and while they may be brief, they affect us in many ways. Nelson Colford as Howie Newsome the unchanging milk man; Joe Laxton as Constable Warren, the aging town law officer; Pat Comerford as the tragi-comic alcoholic Simon Stimson and Myron Porter as the stuffy Professor Willard are but of a

few of the people who touch the lives of the families in the play.

This play was about a community, any community, and the audience really did see a community in action on stage and behind the scenes. June Greenhorn's make-up, Kay Murphy's hairstyles, Pat Albee and crew in the costume department, lighting, sound, music etc. etc. all came together to make the total show work. Marjorie Fielding stage managed behind the scenes with her usual expert efficiency and finally the direction -- so subtly and expertly done by the esteemed June Greisamer. Those who attended the production will be affected by their memories of it, those who missed seeing it, missed a supremely uplifing drama which well deserved the standing ovation given. Mrs. Greisamer has proven again her fantastic, creative ability and her charismatic power to get her performers to deliver the ultimate, -- their best and more.

A bouquet to all the Lakeland Players, you deserve it one and all!

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