

[News](#)[TimeOut](#)[LifeStyle](#)[Local News](#)[Market Place](#)

Playhouse keeps up rich history of one-act plays

By JULIE McHALE - TimeOut Theater Critic

May 21, 2010

You have to be dedicated to make anything last 25 years.

The Village Playhouse of Wauwatosa has accomplished that and more.

Its One-Act Play Festival has been going on since 1986. The event's history dates back to 1984 when a plan was conceived to elicit original scripts from Wisconsin playwrights, pick the best submissions and then find directors and actors to carry them out in a festival format. Five or six plays have been presented each year, but the organization did reach a high of 10 to celebrate its 10th anniversary.

There are six clever selections which are currently being performed at The Alchemist Theater, 2569 S. Kinnickinnic Ave., Milwaukee.

Comedies dominate the offerings. The first offering, Nick Schweitzer's "Potions and Pets," was the weakest of the bunch, but Deanna Chapman (Samantha) and Clarence Aumend (Woof) played memorable roles.

Things improved with Richard Paul Klein's "Self Improvement, Old Testament Style," a play about exorcism that was well acted by Jocelyn L. Dawson and Emily Gaulke. It gently poked fun at the whole idea of devil possession.

Mike Willis' "The Free Man," logistically placed in the middle of the show, set a much more serious tone. It portrayed the struggle of blacks who had fled to the North and were still being pursued by bounty hunters hired by slaveowners. James Hamlet as Beat Kid Box gave a stunning performance as the jailed former slave. His angel, Chapman (Sarah Grimke), also was noteworthy as his rescuer.

Jennifer Najoom's "The Conductor" features a backstage look at a symphony conductor's dressing room. There, he has to deal with the disharmony among orchestra members, visits from his ex-wife, his current wife, wealthy donors and his compelling need to go to the bathroom before curtain call.

Richard Anderson excels as the Maestro, as did Barr as his chief

assistant, Claudia. Rand Higbee's "How Can I Tell If It's Love?" is a delightful piece about young love and the difficulty of ascertaining whether or not it's the real thing. After the advice from the mothers of the couple in question, some guidelines are applied to the situation.

This is probably the funniest of the scripts, and it was beautifully rendered by Mike Crowley and Kathy Macias.

"Eve and Adam" by W. Patrick Fogarty was a slightly different version of the story of Adam and Eve. In this one, God is reevaluating his first "experiment" and deciding to try again for a more successful result.

Archangel Alice, played by Barr, stole the show in this version, and I'm sure she will probably be punished for upstaging God, played by Anderson.

Tom Zuehlke, Mike Crowley, Mary Breitrick, Barbara Lynch, Joan Williamson and Stacie Williams did the honors as directors, and a score of others made the whole event happen.

All told, this is a good entertainment and a representation of hard work.