

ARTS

Raleigh production of 'Gypsy' called bland, dull

By D.F. WILSON
Staff Writer

If anything ever revelled in mediocrity, *Gypsy* does. The final production in Raleigh Little Theater's 1981-82 season, it is almost as if the whole show is one big sigh of relief.

After the Wednesday, May 26 preview, all that came to mind were phrases like "not bad," "O.K.," and "so-so." Every high point I was able to pick out had a contrasting low spot. It is to be hoped that director L. Newell Tarrant will be able to tighten up the performance for further shows.

The Broadway classic, written by Arthur Laurents and Stephen Sondheim with a score by Jule Styne, is based on the autobiography of the first lady of burlesque, Gypsy Rose Lee. Portrayed along the road and in seamy theaters across the country, it is the story of the classic stage mother, Rose Hovick (played by Phyllis Busby) and her two daughters, June and Louise (Wendy Stanley and Ruthie Martinez). Rose pushes her pride and joy, June, until June finally walks out. Then Rose turns to the previously-neglected Louise for star material. Louise eventually does become a star—not as her mother had planned, but as a strip-tease artist.

Busby does an adequate job in the role of Rose, created by Ethel Merman in 1959. While she is vocally immaculate, her acting leaves a lot to be desired. She does a marvelous job of portraying a brassy, driven woman, yet that character rarely changes—at all. Only a few of her lines break out of the mold she has created.

Charles Barrett is the other side of the

coin of this problem. While in the role of Herbie, Rose's agent-friend, his acting is above average, his vocal talents are lacking.

In a cast numbering over 50, Ruthie Martinez does the almost impossible job of being memorable as the lively Louise. It is remarkable how well she effects the slow transition of age, going from a freckled girl in pigtails to the naughty lady of the stage. Not only does her appearance change convincingly, but her voice and manner evolve as well.

One of the problems that plagues the cast is that of their Southern accents, although

Under the direction of Alan Neilson, the orchestra starts out shaky, but tightens up considerably as time passes. Lola Renfrows' choreography is adequate while Steve Currie's lights need a total overhaul. There are some terrible shadows and there were several missed cues.

Tickets for *Gypsy* are \$6 for weeknight and matinee shows and \$8 on Fridays and Saturdays. Student and Senior Citizen prices are \$4 weeknights, \$6 Fridays and Saturdays, and \$2 for matinees. The remaining 8 p.m. performances are June 2-5, 9-13, 16-19 and the 3 p.m. matinee is June 6.

fortunately none of the main characters suffers this.

Some of the highlights of the show are the numbers "If Momma Was Married," sung by June and Louise, and "All I Need is the Girl," performed by Louise and chorus-boy Tulsa (Victor Mangum). On the other hand, one of the hits, Rose's "Everything's Coming Up Roses" is particularly disappointing. One of the most entertaining moments of the evening is "You Gotta Get a Gimmick," sung by strippers Mazeppa, Electra and Tessie Tura (Gina Massel-Castater, N. Caroline Banks and Becky Johnson).

'Old Fears' fails in cliché of terror

By JEFF GROVE
Arts Editor

There is something evil lurking in the cellar. And in the closet. And under the bed. And in the coal pit at the edge of town.

Or so John Wooley and Ron Wolfe would have us believe. Wooley and Wolfe have written a novel titled *Old Fears* (Franklin Watts, 280 pp., \$13.95) which attempts to breathe life into everyone's darkest childhood terrors. The result is a dreary photocopy of the slash-'em-up horror film formula.

Old Fears offers clichés and nothing else. The hackneyed characters and situations are not even thinly disguised. There is the placid small town—which this time

happens to be Tanapah, Oklahoma—and its brusque sheriff who believes that there is a rational explanation for the mysterious deaths which have been occurring in the town. There is the lady doctor who furnishes the love interest, the stalwart hero who protects her, and the crusty editor of the local newspaper, who once worked in the big city but escaped to the unhurried life offered by Tanapah. There are even some victimized teenagers.

books

As the cause of the deaths of the locals gradually emerges—and it could not emerge more gradually—you wonder why you had to go through all this to arrive at

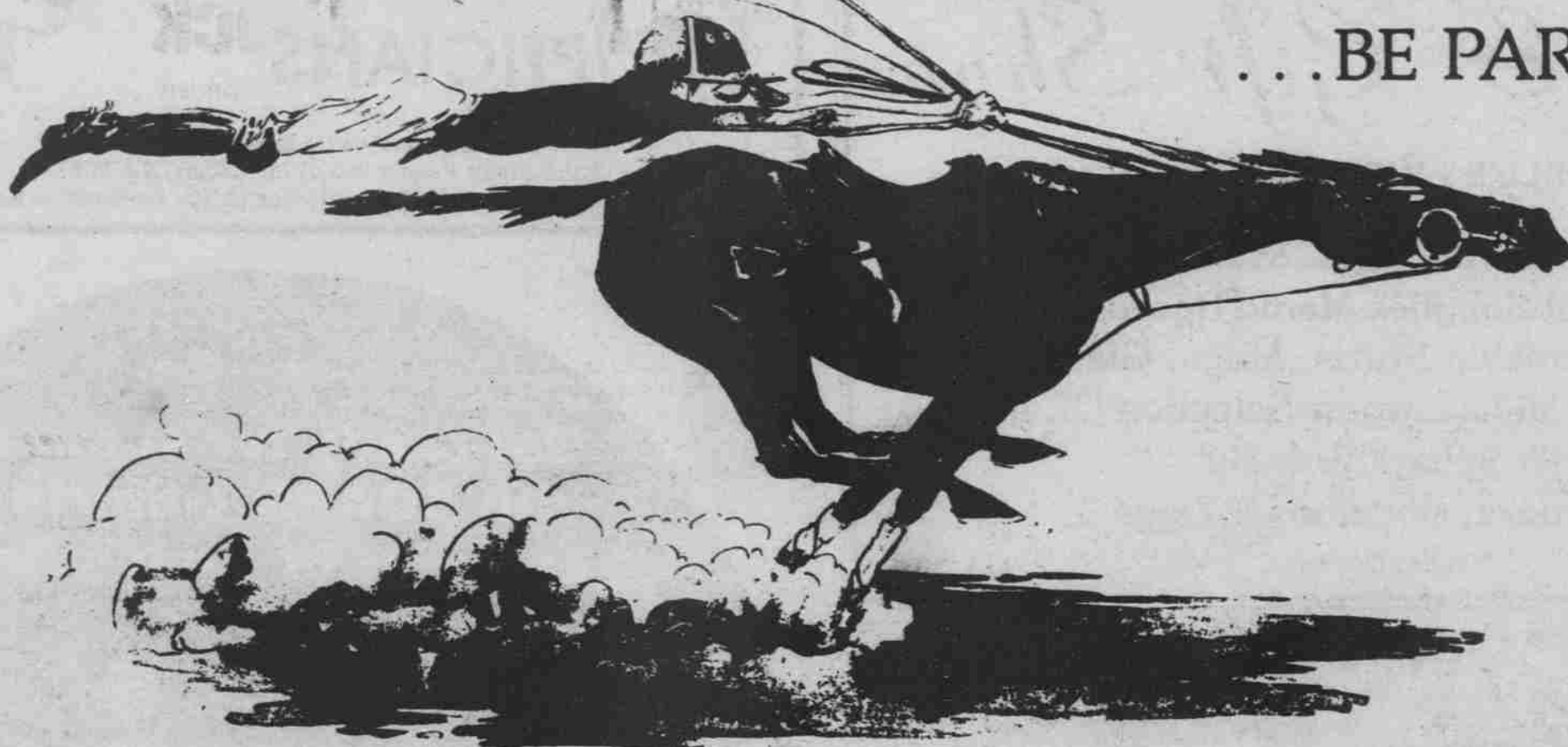
such a cop-out explanation. The novel is painfully slow-moving and predictable. Not a touch of imagination relieves the boredom elicited by the overworked, time-worn figures of speech and the clumsy prose.

Old Fears reads suspiciously like a screenplay, and it would not be surprising if it turned out that Wooley and Wolfe had tried to sell the idea to a studio and, failing that, novelized their script. If they had an original conception well-suited to the form of a novel, they might have had more success. The jacket of *Old Fears* says that the two authors are at work on a second book. Perhaps their next effort will be better than *Old Fears*; it could not be much worse.

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For details please call (919) 471-0147

POLO SOUTH is headquartered at Quail Roost Farm approximately 12 mi. north of Durham on Roxboro Rd. Hwy 501 N. call and come visit us.