

Troupe nails zaniness of 'Unnecessary Farce'

By Tim Keller

Special to *The Chronicle-News*
RATON — To say that "Unnecessary Farce" is a laugh-a-minute comedy is to understate the case. The laughs come at a much faster pace.

The Shuler Theater's Kaleidoscope Players and director Gail Dixon-Willden have captured the play's delightfully quick-paced and ever-surprising zaniness.

The action and humor move so quickly with cleverly timed verbal and sight gags that expert staging and comic acting are critical to the play's success. The Raton troupe has nailed it.

The unseen star is one-time actor Paul Slade Smith, whose brilliantly inventive 2006 script makes hilarious use of a static two-room set in which the audience simultaneously follows the dialog and action in adjoining motel rooms.

Bethany Hernandez and David Trudeau play a pair of untalented young cops placed on a surveillance stakeout: from their room, they can watch and videotape a sting operation in the next room.

Billy Donati is the target, the town's mayor suspected of embezzling \$16 million. Catherine Herrick is the town's new accountant, in cahoots with the cops to get incriminating evidence against the mayor.

Add sexual shenanigans between Trudeau's and Herrick's characters. Add a Gaelic-speaking hit man from the Scottish clan ("That's clan with a C") played by Jason Wells. Add T.J. Mendez as Agent



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The Shuler Theater's summer repertoire theater production of "Unnecessary Farce" provides fast-moving laughs and verbal shenanigans. Caught in the act in a scene from the comedy are, from left, T.J. Mendez, Billy Donati, Catherine Herrick (partially hidden) and David Trudeau.

Frank, a double agent for both the mob and the cops who gets his own sexual shenanigans with Herrick's character. Finally, in Act Two, bring in Wanda Henson as the mayor's wife to give the plot one big final twist.

The result is R-rated

hilarity that seldom lets up. The ensemble cast has so mastered the challenging timing of lines and action that their confidence shows: they have a ball bringing it off.

Among the more remarkable elements is the humor milked from the use

of the Scottish language. Whenever Wells's hit man gets mad, and thus dangerous, his tirades unconsciously lapse into his Scots Gaelic language, which Smith's script has actually provided for the actors in phonetic spelling. The audience can't understand a

word of it, yet it provokes some of the play's most rollicking laughter — especially when Hernandez's cop is pressed into service to provide translation.

You had to be there.

And you still can. The final two performances of "Unnecessary Farce" will

be presented Thursday and Friday nights at 7:30 p.m. General admission at the door is \$15 for adults, \$13 for seniors, and \$5 for children (although the play is not recommended for children). For further information, contact the Shuler Theater at (575) 445-4746.



Associated Press

Colorado Rockies' Dexter Fowler reacts after being put out while trying to advance to third base against the San Diego Padres in the fifth inning of the Padres' 8-4 victory in a baseball game in Denver on Saturday.

Rockies' problems continue in 8-4 loss

Associated Press

DENVER — Christian Friedrich followed the blueprint for the Colorado Rockies.

However, the bullpen couldn't finish the job.

Friedrich, working within the 75-pitch limit dictated by Colorado's new four-man rotation, left the game after the fifth inning with a 2-1 lead.

Two pitchers later, the Rockies were on their way to an 8-4 loss to the San Diego Padres.

"We pitched badly from the sixth inning on," manager Jim Tracy said. "It's unfortunate because the job that Christian Friedrich did was just exceptional. He got us exactly where we needed."

Wilin Rosario homered for the Rockies. Jordan Pacheco had an RBI single and Chris Nelson a run-

scoring double in the eighth for Colorado.

Friedrich was efficient in throwing 74 pitches, and his only mistake was Yasmani Grandal's homer in the fourth — the first of his two home runs — that gave the Padres a 1-0 lead.

Friedrich also shook off a line drive that hit him in the left calf on the fifth pitch of the game to allow just one run and five hits and strike out five.

"It's how I'm supposed to pitch. I need to hit the zone, especially with this new pitch count," he said. "The slider was working real well and I threw a couple of curveballs when I needed it. I thought I located the fastball down and away for the most part. We had a good plan going in."

It fell apart in the later innings.

Batting left-handed in the sixth,

Grandal, who was called up from Triple-A before the game, hit a two-run shot into the left-field bleachers off Jeremy Guthrie (3-7) for a 3-2 lead.

It was the first time a player has homered from both sides of the plate for his first two major league hits, according to the Padres, with information supplied from Elias Sports Bureau.

Alexi Amarista, who hit a grand slam Thursday in Houston for his first big league homer, also hit two home runs. The first came off Guthrie leading off the seventh.

"One was a strike slider, one was a changeup 8 inches off the plate," Guthrie said of the two homers he allowed. "Both in poor locations because they were hit for homers. You make as many quality pitches as you can and give yourself a better chance to succeed."

Rapids blank Portland Timbers in 3-0 outing

Associated Press

COMMERCE — The Colorado Rapids were coming off two demoralizing losses.

They weren't about to suffer a similar fate to the second-year Portland Timbers.

"We coming in needing a win after playing two games that left us feeling badly," Colorado coach Oscar Pareja said. "I knew the boys would play better, be more patient and get some scoring chances."

The Rapids did just that.

Jaime Castrillon and Conor

Casey scored four minutes apart in the first half and the Colorado Rapids defeated the Portland Timbers 3-0 Saturday.

It was Casey's first goal of the year. Colorado (7-8-1) snapped a two-game losing streak with the win.

Jamie Smith scored in the 89th minute to cap the scoring.

"I don't think we had any choice but to play well," Colorado goalkeeper Matt Pickens said. "We have to start making our climb now and putting up zeros up on the board

for opponents and we should be scoring a lot."

Pickens earned his fifth shutout of the season. Pickens is the franchise leader with 27 shutouts and has 37 in his career.

The loss did not sit well with Portland coach John Spencer, a former Rapids standout and a member of the franchise's Gallery of Honor.

"When we go on the road we wonder, can we do this, can we do that," Spencer said. "We never put those devils to bed."

Grownup child should keep distance from abusive, disturbed mom

DEAR ABBY: When I was a child, my mother — a bipolar schizophrenic — abused me. At 12, I decided I had had enough of her mental and physical abuse. A family friend helped me to leave and be placed with my father. I am now 35 and haven't seen my mother since then.

A few years ago I wrote her a letter. In it I included pictures of my children, saying I would like her to know her grandchildren. She ripped the photos into pieces and sent them back with a note telling me to leave her alone and that I had "made my choice in life."

Last month, I received a letter from her saying she regretted destroying the pictures and would now like me to send more and she could meet us all. She also asked me for \$6,000. She claims I "know" she never abused me and that she isn't mentally ill.

It has taken a long time for me to overcome the things she did to me. Even now, when I drive through the old neighborhoods where we lived — a different one for every grade I went to school — I break down in tears from the memories of her abuse.

Should I write my mother back or just let it go? — ON AN EMOTIONAL ROLLER COASTER IN ILLINOIS

DEAR ON AN EMOTIONAL ROLLER COASTER: Let it go. Until your mother is well enough to admit what she did to you — and she ISN'T — do not expose your children to her. And as to the \$6,000, if you can afford to spend that kind of money, spend it on therapy to overcome the sadness that still lingers from your abusive childhood. If you give it to your mother, she will only ask you for more and more.

DEAR ABBY: My wife, "Diane," and her youngest sister, "Jenny," have grown closer

in recent years. Jenny and her husband have been married as long as Diane and I have. Our children are close in age, and none of us is wealthy.

We live in different states. In her attempt to stay connected to Diane, Jenny sends gifts on every conceivable occasion and non-occasion. She sends boxes of cheap items she picks up at her local dollar store — household knickknacks, toys, kitchen gadgets, plastic trinkets and costume jewelry. It's always things we neither need nor use, and the postage probably costs more than the items in those boxes.

Abby, I don't like it. Our home is already jammed with too much stuff. I have told my wife I want her sister to stop sending all that junk. Of course, she doesn't want to hurt her sister's feelings, so she says nothing. I have threatened to tell Jenny myself, but I know that would be a mistake. I don't interact with her and her husband anyway, and we don't communicate well. What can I do? — STUFFED WITH STUFF IN OREGON

DEAR STUFFED: You can't "do" anything because this is something your wife is going to have to deal with. Diane should tell Jenny that the two of you have reached a point in life where you are no longer able to accept things because you have nowhere to put them, and are now in the process of clearing out items you no longer use. She should tell her sister that when she wants to reach out, please do so on the Internet or pick up the phone.

However, if Sissy refuses to take the hint, you and your wife should look for someplace to donate the unwanted items. A thrift shop, church sale, women's shelter or children's hospital would be ideal — if Diane agrees, that is.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.