

Neil Simon's 'Fools' brings hilarity to Shuler

By **TIM KELLER**
The Chronicle-News

Neil Simon's romantic comedy *Fools* arrived at the Shuler last weekend with laughter securely in tow. One of four plays rotated throughout the summer by the Shuler's Kaleidoscope Players professional repertory company, *Fools* is a farce that often resembles a fast-moving comedy sketch. The word play, jokes, one-liners, double entendres, puns, and absurdities come so fast that if you stopped to write one down, you'd miss the next one.

Last Thursday's opening night performance was gifted with a group of three young women in the third row who were so disposed to loud, infectious laughter that if the theater didn't hire them to be there, it

should have; in the second act, the players actually threw comic lines directly at the women, adding to the fun.

The simple story is set in rural Russia a century ago. A young schoolteacher named Leon, played here by the versatile Ian McCabe, arrives in a remote village to accept a job, only to discover that the entire town has for generations been under a curse that makes everyone incredibly stupid. Much of the humor comes from just how stupid these people are: it's fun.

As if stupidity wasn't enough, the curse also prevents the townsfolk from experiencing love. Leon learns that he will break the curse if he can successfully teach pretty Sophia Zubritsky, charmingly



Sara Kowalski and Dreyson Solano cower in fear at the Shuler.

played by Jillian Trice-Solano, but if he fails to break the curse within 24 hours, he will fall victim to the spell himself.

Of course, Leon and Sophia quickly become smitten with each other and the play hilariously winds its way to a happy end.



Ian McCabe and Jillian Trice-Solano play smitten young lovers in "Fools."



J. Michael Craig administers a vision test to Joe Zink in the Neil Simon play.

Sixth Sopris reunion a momentous experience

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Thomas parish priest, has conducted services in each of the past six Sopris reunions. "Forty years ago, on July 4, 1940, we celebrated mass at the St. Thomas church. We danced at the high school gym, we painted the Lincoln High School (LHS) letters, we played bocce. What a wonderful time that was, and the memories of that day still exist in our minds and hearts," Father Koenigsfeld said. "What wonderful stories and occurrences you all hold dear, and what great friendship and joy you've kept close to you all those years. I've wondered how many of you were here when we celebrated that first reunion in 1970. How many of you started your lives in Sopris? There are so many questions that we could ask that point out the passage of time."

Father Koenigsfeld noted the eventual decline of Sopris with the diminishing demand for coal in 1922, exacerbated with the explosion in Sopris mine #2, then the eventual termination of all coal mining operations. "Even through all this, this town stuck together," added Koenigsfeld. "It was only in the 1960s that people had to start leaving en masse. By 1970 almost everyone was gone either right before or after that final party and their New Year's party at

Katie's bar on the evening of 1970.

"But somehow, even though the town has ceased to exist, the town still lives through the way you have all held each other in respect and confidence. What a great tribute to those words, no greater love is there than to lay down one's life for one's family and friends. God bless you all for being here."

Numerous individuals contributed to the huge success of the 6th Sopris reunion. LoRetta Archuleta has worked diligently since the reunion's inception in 1970. Subsequent events were held in 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2005. A large amount of time and effort to the reunions was also donated by Sharon Butero, the former Mary Jane Icitti, Louise Terry and husband Joe, and Pat Martorano-Gagnon. Father Koenigsfeld is an instrumental and irreplaceable personality. On Saturday, Sal Martorano, Duane Zanotelli, and Matt Gagnon provided music for the mass and entertained the large group the remainder of the day. Joe Terry arranged for the implementation of tents and provided signage, among other contributions. Gary Archuleta, with a lot of help from Sam and Pete Incitti, organized and monitored the golf tournament held at the Trinidad Municipal Golf Course on Friday. Gary also assisted sister LoRetta throughout. Numerous others contributed with donations and in so many other ways.

"The reunion reflects people who are aging but are still living life to the fullest," said LoRetta. "People were very reflective and grateful for the memories they have to share with each other. This year, we saw many new faces, but they were still the faces of their parents, grandpar-

ents, and great grandparents. A 4th generation seemed to have a wonderful time together. As the town of Sopris was parceled (at the reunion site), we found the families with their tents named after them or their businesses. The Cerame truck, as it always has, reflects the childhood we lived and loved," LoRetta said.

The other organizers and leaders of the momentous event were also reflective.

"This reunion takes a lot of time and patience," mused Sharon Butero. "I want to thank LoRetta and Pat Martorano-Gagnon and all who helped. It was sure enjoyable to see all our friends and former residents, all the children and grandchildren. Now it's time for the younger generation to take over. We're all getting a little old."

Louise Terry could not have been more pleased and most grateful for the weekend festivities. "What a blessing to be able to share so many memories with so many family and friends," she said. "We are all blessed to have lived in Sopris and be a part of such a wonderful big family. Everyone is considered family, and to start the festivities with a celebration of the mass and a blessing from God is remarkable. We are grateful for Father Jim, who never forgets us and treks from Durango to say mass for all of us."

Lucy Cozalter, now 90, was awarded a prize for the oldest female present. Ted Langowski, 87, was the oldest male. Dave Archuleta won the prize for longest distance, transporting his family from distant Florida.

My childhood friend, Phil "Camel" Shablo (Woodbury, Minn.), wife Lynette, and the extended Shablo family were all participants. Rose Veciellio

was also there with her family. "This is very nice," noted Veciellio. "I was happy to see Dr. Skufca and Father Jim. And my son (Butch) and granddaughter (Sarah) were here from Grand Junction. It was such a great time."

And our remarkable music instructor in the late 1950s, Ernie Montoya, was also in attendance. "I'll never forget Sopris," Montoya reminisced. "That was my first teaching job and I couldn't have found a better place. I saw LoRetta (Archuleta) in Denver at a Friends of Trinidad gathering, and she told me about the reunion. I wasn't about to miss it. It was great to get together with a lot of wonderful old friends."

The Terry clan (Joe, Joe Jr., Gary and Gary Jr.) outdistanced the field to win the Sopris Golf Tournament held at the Trinidad municipal links on Friday with a blistering net 136. The Falsettos (Joe, Brian and Frank), with the assistance of Bob Butero, captured 2nd with a 148. Jay Butero, Lorrie Navarette, Maria (Butero) and husband Frankie Gomez, earned 3rd place honors with a 145. The handicapped tournament format featured a four-person team, two-player best ball.

"It was a blast," said good buddy Phil Shablo. "We didn't do well in the golf tournament, but that didn't matter. I can't express how much I enjoyed this weekend. I'm so glad I came. I had so much fun with my family and all my old friends. If I'm able, I'll be back for the next one."

Joe and Louise Terry have committed themselves to assisting with the next reunion, planned for 2015, and are seeking individuals to participate on the planning committee. The Terrys can be reached at 846-9302 or 846-3544.

Visiting professionals J. Michael Craig and Barbara Farrar are a hoot as Sophia's parents. Craig plays the local doctor; when patient Joe Zink tries to pay him for services rendered, the doctor says, "Nonsense. If I ever go to medical school, you can send me a little something to help with expenses." As Craig - and the script - mine the spirit of Mel Brooks, both he and Farrar clearly have a ball hamming it up throughout the play.

Dreyson Solano also has a field day, going over the top with not just one character, but two. When the teacher tells Solano's

Yousekevitch that there are 24 - not 25 - hours in a day, Yousekevitch replies, "You must be thinking of February."

Ratonians Mariah Fleming and Sara and Mike Kowalski round out the cast as villagers, with Sara Kowalski particularly effective as she bites deeply into her comic part. Tom Evans designed and directed for laughs, and he gets them.

Fools will be performed at Raton's Shuler Theater at 7:30 p.m. July 10, 15, 16, 23, and 24, plus a 2:30 p.m. matinee on Sunday, July 11. General admission is \$15 for adults, \$13 seniors, and \$5 students.

First National kicks off 10th Annual School Supply Drive

Special to The Chronicle-News

The First National Bank in Trinidad has made a commitment to continue its efforts to support the youth in the community by holding its 10th annual "School Supply Drive" to collect for the children in our area. Each year the school supply drive has been a great success. "Many students start school without the necessary supplies to participate in class. We felt this would be an excellent opportunity to help," says Bank Vice President, Chris Huffman. "There are eleven schools that we distribute supplies to and the need is great."

School supplies needed include pencils, erasers, 12" rulers, crayons, glue, scissors, backpacks and notebook paper. Cash donations are also accepted. Donations need to be dropped off no later than August 10th at The First National Bank, main bank, in downtown Trinidad, at the motor bank on 1st Street, or at the Wal-Mart Branch. First National will match every donation. School supplies will be distributed to area schools based upon enrollment numbers, and teachers will be able to give the supplies to the students as needed.

"Unfortunately, we cannot provide all our young people with idyllic childhoods, but we can provide them with the minimum requirements they need to grow up into self-supporting and contributing adult members of society. First National strives throughout the year to support the youth in our area." Mrs. Huffman added, "We hope our efforts will bring an added awareness to the responsibility we have within the community, and that others will join with us to make a difference in the lives of the children who are our future."

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Aileen Hood, ext. 5
aileen@trinidadchroniclenews.com

Director of Creative Services:
Sheila Hamlin, ext. 6
sheila@trinidadchroniclenews.com

Reporter:
David Santistevan Jr., ext. 3
david@trinidadchroniclenews.com

Classified Advertising Office Manager:
Noah Simpson, ext. 4
noah@trinidadchroniclenews.com

Business Manager:
Barry Hood, ext. 8
barry@trinidadchroniclenews.com

Reporter:
Richard Sitts, ext. 7
richard@trinidadchroniclenews.com

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