

'Church Basement Ladies' offers up songs, laughter



Tim Keller/Special to The Chronicle-News

The Church Basement Ladies serve up recipes, songs and laughs. Clockwise from left are Brenda Ferri, Adrienne Coleman, Jillian Solano and Bethany Hernandez.

By Tim Keller
Special to The Chronicle-News

RATON — The Shuler Theater is presenting the popular musical comedy series "Church Basement Ladies" in reverse: It presented a professional touring company in the sequel "A Second Helping" 16 months ago; this summer it's won the rights for its own summer repertoire company to present the original play.

According to director Gail Dixon-Willden, the Shuler's Kaleidoscope Players is the first regional theater company allowed to perform "Church Basement Ladies," after the Shuler's producer Bill Fegan was able to pull in a favor. The show opened locally last Thursday and Friday nights, with additional performances coming this Saturday and Sunday, plus July 12, 13 and 27, and Aug. 4.

Set in the basement kitchen of the East Cornucopia Lutheran Church of the Prairie in Cornucopia, Minn., from 1965 to 1968, the dialect and characters will be enjoyed by fans of Garrison Keillor's "A Prairie Home Companion." The church basement ladies serve recipes, songs and laughs as they weather changes that include, but are not limited to, a funeral and a wedding.

Veteran Raton actor Brenda Ferri is a revelation as Mavis. Coarse and irreverent, Mavis has the play's best lines, but it's Ferri's physical comedy that carries the show. Every time you fix

your eyes on someone else, you miss a big audience laugh, until you learn to do like everyone else and keep your eyes on Ferri. Her performance is worth the price of admission.

Raton's Methodist pastor Adrienne Coleman returns to the stage in her Raton debut as Vivian, the elderly matriarch resistant to change, including guitars in the sanctuary and Lutherans dating Catholics. Coleman is convincingly awkward dressing in a ridiculous Hawaiian luau costume for the church's Easter special event.

Raton-bred Jillian Solano regularly returns home for the Shuler stage, standing up with her well-trained singing voice and acting chops. Here she plays Karin, whose daughter Signe is a chip off the old block in bringing in the new; now it's Karin's turn to be the concerned mother.

Newcomer Bethany Hernandez rounds out the church basement ladies as Signe in an appropriately sweet and charming performance.

The ladies' work is often interrupted by Pastor Gunderson, played by David Trudeau who returns this summer after extraordinary performances last year in "Red, White, and Tuna" and "Love, Sex, and the I.R.S." He has less to do here, so expect his coming roles in this summer series to show off more of his talents.

Dixon-Willden's direction and choreography accentuate the script's laughs while

music director Kelly Jones has guided the cast in fun and harmonious singing for the play's dozen songs, such as "Pale Food Polka" which celebrates Lutherans' aversion to foods that are colorful or spicy. "My Own Personal Island" refers to Mavis's menopausal hot flashes that take her to the tropics in the middle of a Minnesota blizzard. "Dead Spread" is the menu at the church's funerals.

Audience members on the theater's left side can see pianist Carol Simmons just off stage. Her peppy playing and infectious smiles suggest she may be having as much fun as Ferri, who uses the kitchen refrigerator to cool Mavis's hot flashes. Simmons shares credit with Jones for the success of the musical numbers.

"Church Basement Ladies" is the second of four plays running at the Shuler Theater this summer, with 18 performances in July.

"Unnecessary Farce" completes its run this Thursday and Friday, July 5-6. "Servant of Two Masters" premieres July 14, followed by "Web of Murder" July 21.

All evening performances are at 7:30 p.m. Each show also has one 2:30 p.m. Sunday matinee. General admission tickets are available at the door for \$15 adults, \$13 seniors, and \$5 children.

A book of 10 tickets is available for \$100. For the full schedule or other information, call the Shuler Theater at (575) 445-4746.

Rockies pitcher goes back to form but can't win

Associated Press
DENVER — Drew Pomeranz became a different type of pitcher the past few weeks and paid the price.

The Colorado Rockies left-hander went back to his

dominant fastball and was impressive through six innings, but took the loss as the San Diego Padres win 2-0 on Sunday.

"Our starting pitcher put on a clinic today on pitching effectively inside," Rockies manager Jim Tracy said. "He pounded the ball on the inside part of the plate with a four-seam fastball, and I figure he broke at least a half-dozen bats."

That was a big difference for the 23-year-old Pomeranz, who was relying heavily on a cutter he couldn't control with negative results. He went winless in his first five starts with a hefty 4.70 ERA.

"I don't know how I became a cutter guy, but it took a trip to Colorado Springs to figure things out," said Pomeranz, the key figure for the Rockies

last July 31 in the trade that sent Ubaldo Jimenez to Cleveland. "I think I did and it showed today. I actually pitched like myself."

Pomeranz (0-3) turned in an impressive outing after being recalled from Triple-A before the game. He was sent to Colorado Springs on May 11 to work out kinks in his delivery, and for one start it seemed to pay off.

Pomeranz allowed an unearned run on two hits, walked three and struck out one. He worked out of a jam in the second inning and retired 11 of the last 12 batters he faced.

"The game boiled down to we made a throwing run to give them a run and we gave up a two-out, two strike base hit," Tracy said.

Denorfia led off with an infield single in the third inning to Chris Denorfia

that got under the glove of third baseman Jordan Pacheco. Denorfia stole second and scored when Pacheco misplayed a soft popup and Pacheco complicated it by throwing wildly past first base.

The Padres added another run in the seventh. Alexi Amarista reached on a one-out single, advanced to second on a sacrifice and moved to third on a wild pitch. He scored on Denorfia's single to right to make it 2-0.

Kip Wells (1-1) allowed just six hits, walked two and struck out two in his longest outing since his last win — nearly three years ago. The Rockies failed to capitalize on a two-out triple by Dexter Fowler in the third inning and Tyler Colvin's double with two outs in the fourth.



Associated Press

San Diego Padres' Alexi Amarista, left, is congratulated by manager Bud Black after scoring on a single by Chris Denorfia against the Colorado Rockies San Diego Padres in the seventh inning of the Padres' 2-0 victory in a baseball game in Denver Sunday.

"He didn't make mistakes over the plate and if you don't make mistakes over the plate, you've got a chance," Colorado outfielder Michael Cuddyer said.

The Padres signed Wells to a minor league contract

May 7, and he was 1-4 with a 4.97 ERA in seven starts for Tucson. He was called up Tuesday and that night made his first big league start since Oct. 1, 2009, tossing five innings in a 5-3 loss to Houston.

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B 7:00p.m. Tuesday, July 3rd

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O *No one under 12 allowed *No Checks accepted

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Broncos sign new deal with kicker

Associated Press

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. — The Denver Broncos have signed kicker Matt Prater to a new four-year deal, locking up one of the most powerful legs in NFL history.

Executive Vice President

of Football Operations John Elway announced the contract Monday. Terms were not released.

Prater was a clutch performer for the Broncos down the stretch last season with four game-winning field goals. He had

three straight weeks in which he kicked the winner on the game's final play, helping Tim Tebow and the Broncos go on a six-game winning streak that propelled them into the playoffs for the first time in six seasons.

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Presented by The Trinidad & Las Animas County Chamber of Commerce, the City of Trinidad, the City of Trinidad Tourism Board, Phil Long Toyota, Budweiser, Century S&L Associates, Pioneer Natural Resources, Holiday Inn & Suites, La Quinta Inn & Suites & Commissioner Gary Hill
For more information on the event please contact the chamber at 719-846-9285

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