

Encore

Plenty of chic and cheek in TAM'S 'Fallen Angels'

David A. Sargent / Special to the Sun Journal

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MONMOUTH - For five years, Jane and Julia, who are long-time best friends, have been happily married. One day, the flicker of an old flame ignites a fuse that speeds toward explosion with uproarious results.

It's the ladies of the cast of "Fallen Angels" who own the stage in this deliciously intoxicating cocktail of wit and side-splitting comedy presented in coming weeks by Theater at Monmouth.

Olivia Williamson as Julia Sterroll and Erica Murphy as Jane Banbury shine as the wives. They suddenly yearn for the passion of affairs they each had seven years previously with a dashing Frenchman ... and the first passion of their marriages. Their husbands are away for a weekend of golf, and Maurice Duclos is back in town. He has suggested a meeting with the women, who, with the help of ample liquor, become increasingly beguiled by the prospect.

"Passions soar, spirits fly, and insults are hurled as the women grapple with fidelity and the flush of forbidden fruit," says TAM's website.

The third lady in this cast is Marlow Holden as Saunders, the Sterrolls' new maid. With incredible proficiency, Saunders is on-the-spot for every duty, and she discloses unexpected expertise in one area of knowledge after another. The ladies become increasingly annoyed with Saunders' one-up response to every comment.

Holden delivers just the right combination of detachment required of a domestic servant with shrewd perception of the situation. Her every entrance and exit, and every movement and facial expression on stage, is delightful. In fact, one of her scenes has a cleverly choreographed quality.

"Fallen Angels" is a popular comedic work by British playwright Noël Coward. The action all takes place in an upper-class apartment in London. It's 1925, and Coward's fast-paced comedy of manners challenges social codes of the time and exposes the foibles of the British upper class.

Coward, a playwright, composer, director, actor and singer, was a favorite of the roaring twenties literati. He was known for his wit, flamboyance and what Time magazine called "a sense of personal style, a combination of cheek and chic, pose and poise."

All that is central to the tone of TAM's production of "Fallen Angels," and director Brendon Fox skillfully captures that atmosphere. Fox, in his first season with TAM, has worked around the country at regional theaters and training programs.

The play's three male roles are also ably handled by Josh Carpenter as Fred Sterroll and Jacob Sherburne as Willie Banbury. They are required to display degrees of disinterest, disbelief, outrage, disgrace and relief as their wives attempt to cover up their close call with indiscretion.

Jordan Coughtry plays Maurice Duclos in a brief appearance near the show's end in which the former lover of the wives, unaware that they had married, cooperates in a gracious explanation for the wives' dubious actions.

Murphy and Carpenter are in their second season of TAM appearances. The others are making their first-season debuts.

Lex Liang has provided attractive set and costume design. Lighting is by Stephen Jones, and sound by Rew Tippin.

Upcoming performances of "Fallen Angels" at Cumston Hall, Monmouth, are at 7:30 p.m. on July 25 and Aug. 7, 11, 19 and 22, as well as 1 p.m.

Sunday, Aug. 16, and at 7 p.m. on August 9 when a post-show talk-back opportunity is offered.

Ticket prices range from \$10 to \$30, and \$10 rush tickets are available for every performance to anyone under 30. Discounts available for groups of 10 or more. For calendar and reservations, go to the Web site at

www.theateratmonmouth.org or call the TAM box office at 933-9999.