4-26-1990

The Little Foxes

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Taylor Theatre

presents

The Little Foxes

Lillian Hellman's

April 26-28 and May 2-5, 1990
Little Theatre
Taylor University
From the Director:

Lillian Hellman, widely recognized by theatre critics as one of America's foremost realistic playwrights, presents us with a powerful, provocative exploration of unregulated entrepreneurial capitalism in her play "The Little Foxes." The play is set at the beginning of the twentieth century, and in the South the wounds of the Civil War, though they are not forgotten, are no longer openly festering. A new spirit of optimism is spreading through the business community. All that is needed is the courage to risk big in order to win big. As Ben Hubbard says, "The century's turning. The world is open, open for people like you and me. Ready for us. Waiting for us. After all, this is just the beginning."

As the action of the play unfolds we discover that things and people are not always as they seem. Hellman's play gives us a world in which even Eden is vulnerable when the "Little Foxes" breach the wall. We soon discover that the smiles and jocularity, the pious pronouncements about allegiance to religious virtues, morality and ethics, and the joking sarcasm are only images which mask much more complex realities.

Mr. Marshall, the Chicago entrepreneur who has just consummated a business deal with Hubbard and sons—a deal which promises millions to all the partners—responds only to the external images. He admires their "close knit family" and remarks that "It's fine to have partners who so closely follow the teaching of Christ." However, Mr. Marshall has scarcely left for his train when this "close knitting" begins to unravel.

Hubbard and sons' wealth has been amassed at the expense of their families, neighbors and friends. Oscar Hubbard is openly brutal to his wife, Birdie, whom he married solely to gain control of her family's rich cotton plantation. He callously prevents the poor people in the town from hunting the small game animals which they depend on to feed their families. He does this in order to protect his own selfish pleasure. Ben Hubbard's sexism and racism is somewhat more subtle, but it is no less brutal. He says, "I ain't a man who likes being attacked. I can't believe that God wants the strong to parade their strength, but I don't mind doing it, if it's going to be done." It is not surprising that he decides it has to be done.

The Hubbard women also have their part to play in the unfolding drama. Birdie, brutalized psychologically and physically, has been beaten into silence and submission. She is sustained only by her memories of her happy girlhood and her relationship with Alexandra and Horace. When these sources of solace fail her, she retreats to her room where her sole companion is a bottle.

Regina Hubbard is the opposite of Birdie. She has learned to act the part of the fragile, flirtatious, witty, altogether charming Southern belle. In this role she manipulates the men who believe they control her. Behind her soft exterior, she observes her brothers' business dealings and absorbs the lessons they unwittingly teach her about the relationship between the powerful and the powerless. All her life she has wanted only one thing—to be very, very rich—and all her life the men she has had to depend on, father, brothers, husband, have deprived her of her dream. When she discards her charming smile and reveals herself to be capable of ruthless cruelty that surpasses both her brothers, no one is prepared. As Ben says, "None of us have ever known you well enough, Regina."

Hellman's characters and her plot are compelling but they do not alone account for the dramatic power of the play. It is the moral argument, the spine of "The Little Foxes" which makes it relevant to us in 1990. Hellman's deepest belief about human nature appears to be that we are all flawed creatures, confusing blends of goodness and badness, and all human beings determine their own destinies by the choices they make—even those choices involving the treatment of other people.

Addie says, "There are people who eat the earth and eat all the people on it...Then there are people who stand around and watch them eat it. Sometimes I think it ain't right to stand and watch them do it."

Hellman ends the play with Alexandra's discovery of an alternative moral choice. She comes to understand that her Mother and her Uncles are among those who "eat the earth," and she rejects this option. "Tell Uncle Ben for me, Mama, I'm not going to stand around and watch you do it. Tell him I'll be fighting as hard as he'll be fighting some place where people don't just stand around and watch."
Assistant Directors: Lisa Curless
                   Tracy Tobey

Set Crew: EDDIE JUDD*
         STEVE BARRON*
         Shawn Denny
         Danny Dixon
         Don Hoesel*
         Steve Kersten
         Fred Knoll
         Chris Otto
         Kyle Schroeder

Make-up: ALYSON FLYNN
         JACK LUGAR*
         Jane Huntzinger*
         Lynne Kinzer
         Angie Rupp
         Elisabeth VarnHagen

Properties: TAMARA HITTLE*
            Annette Herman
            Mandy Hess*
            Kurt Stout

Lights: LAURI MULLENS
        Dan Kett
        Mike Risher
        Jason Wolf

Sound: ILAN KIBBEY
       David Abraham*
       Tim Grable

Costumes: ELYCE ELDER*
          Sherri MacFadyen
          Tracy Marshall*
          DeeDee Slough
          Cathryn Zahn

House: GARY GALLUP
      LEE ANNE KERN
      Heather Long
      Joel McKinney
      Marc Plastow
      Neil Propst
      Dawn Roth
      Traci Southern
      Beth White

Program Cover Design: Steve Baarendse