

## Little Theatre

# Season 'Satisfying'

By Jane Krows  
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"It has been a very satisfying season artistically and attendance-wise," despite three major disappointments.

That was Producer Guy S. Little Jr.'s assessment of the 11th season at the Little Theatre in Sullivan, which closed Sunday.

The disappointments, he said, were the play "Voice of the Turtle," which he called "a complete disaster," the poor attendance at "Odd Couple" and the weak acting of Gardner McKay in "Funny Girl."

The most successful productions, Little said, were the musicals "Show Boat," "On a Clear Day You Can See Forever" and "Funny Girl," all of which played to near-capacity audiences during two-week runs.

"Funny Girl," which featured the producer's wife, Jerili, probably was more of a financial success than the other two productions, Little said, because

tickets sales were on an individual basis. There were many benefit parties at the other two musicals, he noted.

Also successful were "South Pacific" and "Sweet Charity," which, according to Little, "did not have a good advance sale. But once the reviews were read and the word got around, the ticket sale was great."

### Attendance Average Higher

Over-all, despite a shorter season (20 weeks) than in 1966, the average attendance was higher.

Little said 68,000 persons attended 163 performances, including eight by the Children's Theatre.

Last season's 22-week schedule attracted 72,000 persons to 185 performances, he said. So the 1967 season averaged about 21 more persons a performance.

Two of the most rewarding productions, in the producer's viewpoint, were "Show Boat," an old standard, and the drama,

"Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?"

"I went to tremendous expense to bring top stars and voices for 'Show Boat,'" Little said. "I was still afraid it might not draw. It was a great surprise that it packed the theater for two weeks."

Concerning "Virginia Woolf," Little said he was pleasantly surprised by favorable reviews and good attendance. "It was gratifying to do an adult drama with an actress of the stature

of Mercedes McCambridge, and have it well received.

"So often a television personality or soap opera star is the big drawing card."

Little said "Voice of the Turtle," which starred actress Terry Moore, was not only a financial and artistic disaster but also an embarrassment to him.

He explained that show was selected and the stars signed late in the season after other tentative plans did not materialize.

It originally was planned to have Dennis Weaver star in a production during the time which "Voice of the Turtle" ran, Little explained. But Weaver was unable to appear.

Little said he then asked Miss

Moore's agent if she would be available to do "Born Yesterday." After a long wait, he was notified that she would do "Voice of the Turtle" if she could bring her own leading man, Little said.

When the play opened with Gordon McLendon playing opposite Terry Moore, it was apparent the wealthy businessman was unable to carry the part, Little said. After two nights, McLendon withdrew from the cast and was replaced by a resident actor.

Little called "Odd Couple," which starred television actor Alan Young, "one of the best shows we have ever produced," but said it didn't do well at the box office. "I could not under-

stand this," he said. The producer said although Gardner McKay was a drawing card because of his looks, his undisciplined performing made it difficult for the rest of the cast.

"Every season gets more difficult," Little said. "I cannot relax on past laurels. I have high aims for the Little Theatre and want every production to be the best that the physical limitations of the theater will allow.

"You know, being in a rural area the potential attendance is not great. In a city where a million people live in a 15-to-20-mile radius, there are many to draw from. Here, in a 100-mile radius there are not that many prospective customers."