

Growing old



Photo / Anthony Monsarati

by Cheryl Downton

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life,
For which the first was made.
Our times are in His hand.

(**Rabbi Ben Ezra**, stanza 1,
Robert Browning 1864.)

Browning's verse of so many years ago is easily applicable to Bernard Slade's play of this decade. **Same Time, Next Year** is a day every February in the lives of two people who have a once a year affair. Doris and George are married (not to each other), and meet in 1951 beginning a relationship which lasts twenty-five years, and then some. This tale of two people who share their lives together, yet apart, makes a heart-warming, sometimes funny, sometimes sad, almost a too real story that leaves bygone memories begging for renewal.

Doris, played by Joan Gregson, begins as a twenty-five year old married woman on her way to an annual retreat run by nuns, where she goes to "think about what I think." George, played by David Brown, starts off as a harried husband with three kids and a wife, who comes to California once a year to spend a quiet weekend.

George and Doris meet in the bar of the Inn while the juke box cranks out "If I'd Known You Were Coming I'd Have Baked a Cake." They trot off to bed and the next twenty-five years together is a summary of their lives. Once a year they meet to catch up with each other—changes, hardships, good times, new family additions, and the loss of those dear. It's an annual reunion, for better or for worse.

Nothing really out of the ordinary happens: George feels guilty; Doris is Italian; George has a brown thumb; Doris takes correspondence courses; George plays the piano; Doris has a baby; George is temporarily impotent; Doris dyes her hair; George drinks scotch; Doris feels younger; George feels older; Doris feels older; George feels younger; Doris goes to college; George grows sideburns; Doris fights to ban the bomb; George cries for his son lost in Viet Nam; Doris needs glasses; George is into biofeedback; Doris gets a new nose; George has an identity crisis; Doris becomes a businesswoman; George wants to be a hermit; Doris is losing her husband; George loses his wife; Doris feels guilty; George becomes a

Van breaks down

by Mark Simkins

The legend came to the stage and the legend was boring. Van Cliburn, the famous Texan pianist, turned out to be a bit of a tall tale. He has lost the magic that enchanted Russian audiences twenty years ago and lifted him to instant, popular success. He hasn't lost the boyish charm and certainly he hasn't lost any height but excellent as his technique is, the spell has been shattered. The soul, the emotion, something vital anyway, seems to have been lost.

When Van Cliburn first came on stage, it took a minute to adjust to this giant towering over the diminutive Victor Yampolsky. Van Cliburn is tall and thin, like the body of Abe Lincoln reincarnated with a carefully, coiffed head of curly blondish-brown hair. Most noticeable, though, are his enormous, long, white fingers, as though someone started cloning for ideal pianist's fingers back in the early fifties.

Beethoven's "Emperor" concerto seems all in fits and starts for the pianist, and fluid though Van Cliburn's fingers were, the piece seemed jerky to me. I would have much preferred a piece by Chopin or Mozart or perhaps one of Beethoven's sonatas. However well he played and he played well, something was missing right from the start. Perhaps it is 20 years of doing 60 concerts a year, and all the

staleness that must come from such a schedule. Maybe Van Cliburn should rest, he is young and probably wealthy and a comeback from such a sabbatical would only enhance an already enormous reputation.

Certainly his performance did not move me, except to nod my head with drowsiness, the first time it had happened at the ASO. Normally music overwhelms my senses but I was sufficiently detached to develop claustrophobia from a thousand, thick fur coats, feel my nostrils drown in a sea of perfumes and chart a course to the nearest fire exit. Relief was my chief emotion at the finish of Van Cliburn's performance.

Certainly Van Cliburn seems very likable and charming, but let us hope he gets a rest from all these concerts and can recover the magic that must lie dormant somewhere inside that big frame.

The Bruckner Symphony No. 6 which followed Van Cliburn's performance was very enjoyable, I always enjoy Victor's flamboyant conducting. I wasn't moved to ecstasy by the performance but it was enjoyable.

The concert was summed up in the after-babble of the society matrons, as 'nice', it seemed the word most frequently overheard. Certainly not the orgiastic experience one would expect from the ads preceding the concert or from the price of the tickets.

teacher; Doris is getting 'potty'; George loves Doris and Doris loves George.

It is truly amazing how twenty-five years can be so adequately covered in an evening's entertainment. While much of the credit must go to the playwright and the actors, the simple set changes and costume differences were excellent. One could actually believe time was indeed ticking away. Nothing can stay exactly the same as time changes all. In **Same Time, Next Year** simple things made all the difference. Between each five year time period, (each scene was five years apart), the time was never

lost. Each was spanned by a sound track of period memorabilia, ranging from early rock and roll and a Texaco ad, to Elvis, Kennedy and the World Series, through Viet Nam, Martin Luther King, the Beatles and the pepsy generation, on to Ali and Watergate. Not only was it good to hear, it placed the audience exactly where it was supposed to be.

A play with only two characters demands the best. No one was disappointed. Gregson and Brown are superb—they are very believable. They return parts of ourselves and let us "touch and hold on very tight."

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