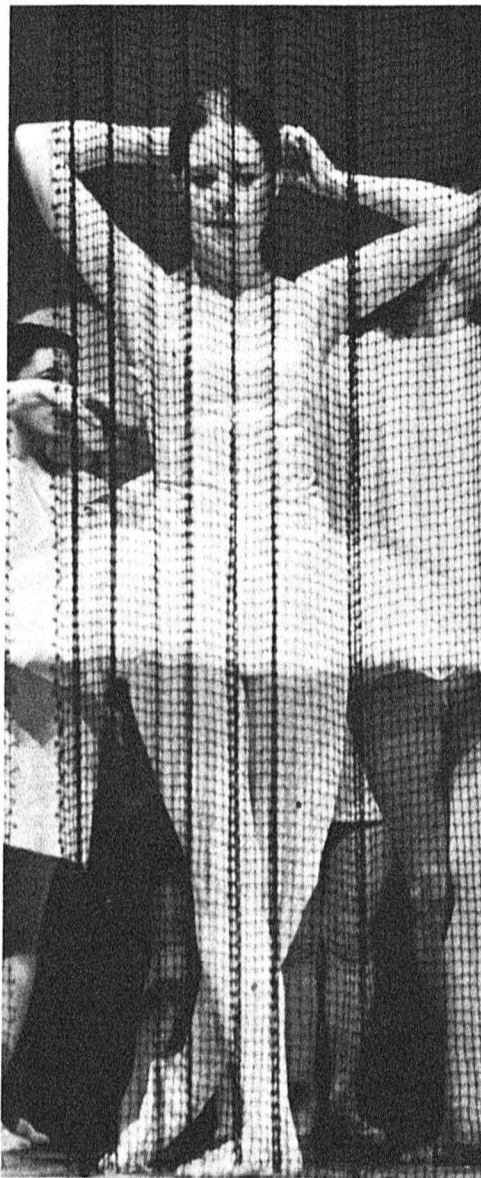


by
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Craig, Davison shine in "Mame!"

though chorus lists to left



You've read the book, seen the play, gone to the movie, heard the record, bought the comic book and collected the bubble gum cards—now Jubilaires bring you the musical comedy version of *Mame!*

Perhaps the most important news to come out of this VGW production is the indication, for the first time in some years, that Jubilaires are technically capable of mounting a large-scale musical. In past the organization has proven itself admirably suited to well-written but small productions, such as *The Fantasticks* and *Stop the World, I Want to Get Off*. When they have attempted greater things, such as *Girl Crazy*, they have been unable to rise above the resultant technical and artistic problems.

Mame! is a vast musical, requiring sixteen scene shifts, a large cast and multiple costume changes. The basic set (Mame Dennis' apartment) employed by Jubilaires is extremely functional and used intelligently by the director, John Rivet. On rollers, the set is easily rotated and rearranged, and the front curtain is utilized to create new settings. The costumes are far more varied and interesting than we have come to expect of Jubilaires productions. The group is to be congratulated for having surmounted the more difficult technical problems this musical presents.

What all this shows is that, as a group, Jubilaires is now capable of staging a large musical. Whether they have actually done so with *Mame!* is another matter. The chorus, although vocally strong, has little that might be called stage presence. During large cast numbers, they have the irritating tendency to list lopsidedly to stage left. During dance sequences, the majority of the cast stand around, all too consciously listening for their cue to make a move. That they are unable to work together more effectively seriously undermined the rest of the musical.

However, two people in the chorus deserve special commendation. In Act One, Brenda Rimmer could immediately be singled out of the chorus by her clear, powerful voice. Her characterization in Act Two of the smarmy socialite, Gloria Upson, was sickeningly accurate. Trudy Seliger was perfect as Mame's domineering future mother-in-law, Mother Burnside.

Of the major characters, Richard Davison most distinguishes himself as an actor. Playing Beaugard Jackson Pickett Brunside, he obviously knows the character he is portraying, and has his Southern accent and gestures under control in a well-modulated performance. Janey Craig reveals a marvellous comic sense in her role as the vail, acidic actress, Vera Charles. As the frumpy nanny Gooch, Susan Polsky gives an adequate portrayal in a role that could not fail to succeed.

Lawrence Day, playing the young Patrick Dennis, is a beautiful kid with one of the purest voices in this production. By contrast, the older Patrick (Blain Gowing) has an uncertain, toneless voice and no acting talent. He comes off as stupid. It is difficult to believe that this bright boy could grow up to be so contemptible.

Despite this wealth of talent in the minor roles, *Mame!* fails from lack of a center. In the title role, Kerry Hughes tries to make Mame Dennis over into Kerry Hughes. The whole point about Mame is that she is a very kinky lady, a genuine kook. Miss Hughes plays her as an affected, artificial scatterbrain. Her flamboyant gestures and terribly precise articulation destroy the humanity we should feel in Mame.

This is no better seen than in her opening number, "It's Today", a song soaked in bathtub gin evocative of the wild penthouse parties in the Prohibition twenties. Instead of a wild and slightly exotic woman, Miss Hughes gives us Goldie Hawn doing an imitation of Ethel Merman. And again in "If He Walked Into My Life", a song which should show us the sadness that Mame is capable of, we feel the lack of substance in Miss Hughes' characterization. You took the muse right out of the horn, Mame.

Jubilaires' second production this year is an uneven, often frustrating show. The potential for better things is clearly visible, and the vitality of this group can overcome just about any fault. But they are still in need of a leading lady who can play Mame.