

Clever 'Mimi' needs tightening

MIMI LE DUCK. Music by Brian Feinstein. Book & lyrics by Diane Hansen Young. Presented by The Adirondack Theatre Festival. Directed by Thomas Caruso. Musical direction by Chris Fenwick. Set design by Andy Warfel. Lighting design by Chris Dallos. Costume design by Randall Klein.

By **BOB COUTURE**
For *The Daily Gazette*

The Adirondack Theatre Festival, located at the beautiful Charles R. Wood Theatre, is presenting its twelfth world premiere in ten years, "Mimi Le Duck," a cleverly conceived musical comedy that stretches across two continents and has much potential, although the present production needs work and some strengthening.

Let us, however, give credit where it is due, for this show has a noble purpose and makes pretty good strides in the area of farce with some very strong singing and dramatic performances and a few bumps and bruises along the way.

Here's the story. Miriam is a wife and mother, presumptively

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happily married and living in Ketchum, Idaho and of the Mormon persuasion. She makes her living painting pictures of ducks for the QVM shopping channel.

After a series of eye-opening experiences, Miriam decides to abandon everything and flee to Paris to pursue the bohemian life. Well, if you made your living painting ducks for a television channel, wouldn't you?

Along the way, ultimately living in a small room once inhabited by Ernest Hemingway, Miriam encounters the other side of life. And thereby hangs the story.

Musical moments

"Mimi" has some good musical pieces in it. For example, Annie Golden, our heroine, Miriam, has a strong, sure voice and is very effective in works like the quotidian but well-structured "Painting Ducks and Marking Time," which gives the show a needed opening lift.

Golden's glittering voice is also put to good use in "There

Are Times in Life" and the second act show-stopper, "The Garden is Green."

As her intimidated but determined husband, Peter, Brian Scott Johnson clicks in all his vocal work as he pursues Miriam to Paris, determined to bring her back but finding himself changed. His "Peter's Song" is a marvel of delivery.

Another gem is the "Green Flash" song that opens Act II, sung to induce the audience to participate by the rakish but lovable gypsy pickpocket, played with great bravado by Louis Tucci.

One of the real problems with this show is the heavy miking that sometimes grates and hurts understanding the numbers being done.

Director Thomas Caruso brings this in-progress play in with finesse and much clarity. Tweaking will probably help the sometimes dragging scenes and may shorten the occasional long vocal efforts.

"Mimi" plays until Saturday, July 31. It is certainly worth at least a look-see. For ticket information call 798-9663.