

'Bingo' is light, humorous fun

By MICHAEL ECK
Special to the Times Union

GLENS FALLS ... B-2, I-17,
N-41, G-50, O-75, Bingo!

The inventive folks at Adirondack Theatre Festival have come up with yet another new twist on the old game of musical comedy.

This time around, patrons are given cards and actually get to play along with the stars at "Bingo."

The little play, written by Michael Heitzman, Ilene Reid and David Holcenberg, is being produced appropriately enough at the Church of the Messiah's Parish House. The quaintly stuffy room has the perfect site-specific atmosphere, right down to the folding chairs and humming fans in lieu of air conditioning.

The ATF troupe has been temporarily displaced from its regular Woolworth store digs this summer, so it's making theater where it can, and where it feels right ... just as it's done so often in the past.

"Bingo" is a silly bit of fun that, at least between rounds, tells the story of a bunch of bingo-obsessed ladies who brave a dangerous trip through Hurricane Dora to get to the hall. After all, as Lori Fischer's Patsy points out, the forecast calls

for ``cloudy skies with 100 percent chance of bingo."

As the show unfolds it deepens (well, sort of) with the revelation of a 15-year feud between the brassy Liz McCartney's bossy Vern and Jan Leigh Herndon's faux-sweet Bernice.

Parts of ``Bingo" almost resonate with emotion, but the author's (who are still developing the show) never stray too far from a punch line ... verbal, musical or otherwise.

The tunes ... which range from the blustery opening ``Anyone Can Play Bingo" to the oddly endearing ``Gentleman Caller" to the patently goofy ``I Believe in You," which is accompanied by a trio of dancing green troll dolls ... are cute pastiches of Broadway styles, with Beth Malone's bizarre romp through ``Ratched's Lament" winning the evening's door prize for strangeness.

Malone plays Bernice's daughter Alison, a struggling New York actress who is ``understudy for Nurse Ratched in a production of `One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest ... The Musical.'"

Director Glenn Casale keeps the comedy moving, and he makes sure to give all of his actors little bits to keep them busy. And choreographer Casey Nicholaw gets a lot of good mileage out of bingo dauber routines.

Pianist David Truskinoff's off-

stage band supports the singers well, with arrangements that are as eccentric but on-target as the rest of the show.

The producers hope that "Bingo" will do for charity games what last season's "Guys on Ice" did for ice fisherman, namely draw people out to fill the seats of their traveling theater."

It should. It's light, good humor delivered with a wink, a smile and a song.

THEATER REVIEW

BINGO

Performance reviewed: 8 p.m. Thursday

Where: Adirondack Theatre Festival at Parish House, 296 Glen St., Glens Falls

Running Time: 90 minutes, no intermission

Continues: 8 p.m. July 5, 6, 8-12. 3 p.m. Sunday, July 13

Tickets: \$22

Information: 798-7479

Web site: <http://www.ATFestival.org>