

DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS

Book by Jeffrey Lane Music and Lyrics by David Yazbe

Sevenvenues at Chrysler Hall

November 13-18

For times and tickets call (757)664-6464 or (757)671-8100

Hello, I'm Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large.

Before it was a musical, it was a movie. In fact two movies. The first was "Bedtime Story" starring Marlon Brando and David Niven. with Shirley Jones. Years later the movie was done again with Steve Martin, Michael Caine and Glenne Headly as the woman two con artists on the French Riviera plan to seduce and run off with her money.

One of the guys is a smooth old pro at the art of getting jewelry and money from rich ladies. He takes on a younger ambitious rogue of a fellow as a sort of apprentice. This is the basic setup for the farce frame work of the book. There are cunning twists and surprises as the story unfolds. David Yazbe has woven in not very tuneful songs with sometimes amusing lyrics. Choreographer Vince Pesce offers lively dances and musical staging in a by- the-book all too familiar Broadway style. The producers have provided smoothly functioning, colorful scenery. by David Rockwell and spiffy, fresh and fun costumes, by Gregg Barnes. Philip Wm. McKinley is the Broadway veteran director. These are the ingredients necessary for a successful musical on the great white way.

What's missing here is a professionally experienced cast. While they perform with youthful vigor and lots of energy and competence, the final product is more first class summer stock than what one expects from a New York production. This is a non-Equity presentation meaning that the performers are not members of the professional actors' union. While many members of the company are quite skilled, the show lacks the lightness and seeming ease necessary to bring life to a farce. Acting in a farce is much more difficult than it appears to be. The performers work should occur with spontaneity and seemingly without effort,

Most successful in attaining the farcical style in this edition is Jeff Essex as Andre Thibault. He reminds one of Peter Sellars who was a master of the genre. Jamie Jackson is an imposing presence as the leading rotten scoundrel but one wishes he had a lighter touch ala David Niven. Doug Thompson as Freddy works so hard at being funny and, as a result, he rarely is. The leading, somewhat generic bimbo type ladies, provide lots of the comedic life of this rendition of "Scoundrels" as portrayed by Suzanne Sole, Jen Jenkins, and Jenny Gulley.

Frank Rizzo of the Hartford Courant once said, "If non-Equity shows are Broadway, Velveeta is cheese." I wouldn't exactly say that about this production. Still, it does lack that very special, glitzy zest of exceptionally talented, experienced performers one expects from a big hit musical from New York.

This is Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large and I'll see you at the next opening.