

## An old-fashioned comedy gets new life from Christian Theatre

By Charles Jarrett

Irene Dunn and William Holden did it in 1947. Gary Mutz and Beth Chastain are doing it right now! They are the leads in fun-filled comedy, Lindsay and Crouse's "Life with Father," which generally depicted America's family values at the turn of the century.



The Contra Costa Christian Theatre is delivering a charming production under the keen direction of Al Anderson in the Village Theatre in Danville. I have to admit that I had a somewhat difficult time at first getting my sensibilities past the outrageously outdated male dominated values ascribed to in this old fashioned Christian comedy.

Put aside the critical parent in yourself and allow yourself to sit back and enjoy the marvelous characters, the superb acting and the outstanding visual experience, and you will come away with a highly enjoyable theatrical experience. Actually, it didn't take all that long for me to realize that the authors were really making fun of those inept attitudes and misogynistic ways.

It is a comedy that the entire family will enjoy, because there is something in each of its characters that I am sure will be familiar to all of us. The plot is very simple, but like a roll-a-coaster ride, there are a lot of intricate twists and turns, ups and downs, and interconnected side adventures.

Father (Gary Mutz) lets slip that he was never baptized, and to his shocked Episcopalian wife and family, this will never do. His wife Vinnie (Beth Chastain) is worried they might not even be legally married in the eyes of the church. The

very lovely and simplistic Vinnie is portrayed as a typical woman of the times, not too bright and totally dependent on a man's grace and good judgment for her financial and intellectual wellbeing. At the same time she is a very clever fox!

Vinnie vows that her husband will get baptized and he vows with an equal fervor that he is too old for a process that he considers is an act that only children or heathens need partake of. He keeps putting it off with one excuse after another until one day, when his wife becomes very ill, he promises in a fear inspired prayer that if his wife comes through this he will do anything asked of him, including being baptized.

The rock-strewn path toward salvation takes many turns, and while dad and mom are engaged in a verbal marathon, the children are each in their own way, dealing with growing up and issues of their own, issues appropriate for their age.

The cast is really a terrific. Mutz has for a long time been a favorite of mine as an actor who moves with calculated purpose. His voice is clear and resonant, allowing the audience to hear and understand each and every word. Mutz is a master comedian as well as dramatic actor, consequently, a strong draw for me to go and see this show.

Chastain is equally confident and dramatic, a very fine actress who handles father's ranting with aplomb. Great job! Everyone performs well and the audience has a delightful evening in store, due in part to some really well directed acting and some excellent local talent.

Continued on page 50

## Theatre Review

Continued from page 19

This fun-filled show plays through June 30. Ticket prices are downright reasonable at \$15 to \$19 each. The Village Theatre is located at 233 Front Street in Danville. Call 798-1300 for tickets or visit the web site, at [www.ccchristiantheatre.org](http://www.ccchristiantheatre.org).

# Rossmoor News

## June 12, 2002