

'Little Foxes' chugs, but picks up speed

By **MATT MEYER**
Of the Emerald

Thursday night's opening of the Carnival Theatre's production of *The Little Foxes* was something like trying to take a trip in a very old VW bug — hard to get started, but fine once it's up to speed.

Act One was slow. The characters and necessary relationships were established almost immediately, but the introductions dragged on for the better part of an hour.

With all the southern accents,

cuts and howling, it was a little like sitting through a marathon screening of Carol Burnett's "American Family" sketches.

Once the cast waded through the first act, however, the play shifted gears.

George Lauris put on an excellent performance as Horace Giddens, the dying husband of the domineering Regina Giddens (played by his real wife, Priscilla Lauris).

Regina and her brothers Benjamin (Robert Foster), Oscar (Gary Stevens) and Oscar's son Leo (Dana Black) are

members of the incredibly greedy Hubbard family who live to reap ill-gotten profits by exploiting poor blacks.

Horace seeks to save his daughter Alexandra (Terri Lorang) from the greedy clutches of the Hubbard family by foiling his wife's plan for investing in a mill that would bring millions to the family and ruin to the town.

Regina is a tiger when she wants to be, and there's nothing fiercer than a cornered feline. The resulting cat fight is incredible.

Little Foxes is all that a play should be. It covers the spectrum of human emotions.

The misery of Oscar's alcoholic wife Birdie (Mary Gaither) brings tears to your eyes. The keenly timed wit of Horace will make you laugh like a child.

Although the conniving avariciousness of the Hubbard family will fill you with disgust, the good-hearted innocence of Alexandra will restore your faith in humanity.

The acting was underdeveloped at worst and magnificent at best. George Lauris' timing was impeccable, his goodness not overstated, and his character well-developed. Jerry Walker showed confidence and poise in his perfor-



Photo courtesy University Theatre

George Lauris portrays the crippled husband of real-life wife Priscilla Lauris in *The Little Foxes*.

mance as mill-owner William Marshall.

Priscilla Lauris, though adequate in her portrayal of the dominating Regina, didn't develop the softer feminine side of the character. The relationships between Regina and the other members of the Hubbard family could have been

developed more to bring out the family ties.

On the whole, however, the acting was extremely well done.

The play was superb technically as well. The set, designed by Jerry Williams, was a realistic rendition of a turn-of-the-century southern house complete with stained glass, oil lamps and Victorian furniture. The set's only problem was a lack of knick-knacks that characteristically clutter such a house.

The costumes also were well done. The use of color in the ornate gowns — Regina's gowns all were blood red — added to the show. Birdie and Alexandra appeared in light colors and pastels.

The second and third scenes made up for the slow pacing of the first. All in all, *Little Foxes* finished a winner.

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