



THE EDUCATION OF ANGELS

by Matthew Carlin

Nov 5-7 and 12-14, 2010

Judging by the applause, the standing ovation, and the favorable comments we received on each of the six performances of *The Education of Angels*, I conclude that the 2010 Dinner Theater was a success once again. And to that end I thank you, our faithful supporters who not only come back year after year but also come back bringing friends. Your laughter, applause and compliments are the only remuneration the actors get and they love it, it's what keeps them coming back to do it all again next year.

Nick and Jenna are angels-in-training that are about to be sent back to Earth for their final exam. The problem is, these two can't seem to get along, which leads to a very competitive situation. When they return to earth they find Dave, a guy who is even more mixed up than they are. He is at the church, long before he should be, on his wedding day, trying to decide whether or not to go forward with the wedding. Throw in a domineering ex-wife and the fact that Dave is the only one that can see the angels (well actually he can see only one of the angels) and multiple comic situations ensue.

Review by Terry Pugh

It's ironic that Angels, who are supposed to inhabit lofty realms, apparently have to descend back down to Earth to receive their higher education.

But it's also nice to see that those who have passed on still retain their sense of humour.

"*The Education of Angels*", staged over the past two weekends as a dinner theatre production by the Langham Theatrical Company, earned excellent marks from audiences for its clever script and solid acting. A standing ovation at the end of the performance November 13 was indicative of how well the play was received.

Langham Theatrical Company Director Sela Balzer chose the play after seeing it performed by a community theatre group in Speers earlier this year, and decided it was a nice fit for her own group. The combination of humour, pathos and a surprise ending contained in playwright Matthew Carlin's script struck a chord with the appreciative audience. But even the best script needs a director, actors, and production crew to bring it to life – and that's where the Langham troupe shone.

Corinne Waldner stole most of the scenes she was in with her character of Jenna, an "Angel-in-Training" who is actually quite un-angelic. "Pushy" would be a kind way of characterizing her attitude and actions. She has all the subtlety of a snowplow. Still, she grows on you, and by the end of the play, she emerges as one of the most kind-hearted and sensitive of the protagonists. Beneath that blustery exterior is a soul yearning to help others – whether they want it or not.

It turns out her personality is just the ticket for "Dave", the character played by Steven Balzer. Dave is a chronically-insecure guy who's about to get married for the second time. But the prospective groom is having second thoughts on his wedding day, and his dilemma is aggravated by his ex-wife Natalie, played with a toxic flair by Crystal Levesque. Natalie likes to push Dave around – literally – and Jenna pushes Dave to push back.

The thing is, apparently, angels are invisible to most people. They are only seen by those people who need their help, so the one-way conversations with non-visible angels make for some interesting moments on stage.

While Jenna's character is aggressively helpful, the other Angel-in-Training is morose and even a little bitter. "Nicholas", played by Rocky Dyck, has still not gotten over the fact that he's had to leave behind his wife and child on earth. It's not until he comes across an old man on a park bench who shares some insights on life, love and taking the time to enjoy both. It seems that apparently, mortals can dispense wisdom to angels.

A great supporting cast includes Darrell Novakovski - the wise-cracking, stogie-smoking cab driver; Emery Ens – perfectly cast as the soft-spoken pastor; Tom Wall as the wisdom-dispensing old chap on the park bench; Evan Pady as Dave the groom's best friend, and Jordyn Kuzek – who plays the prospective young step-daughter of Dave. One of the nice touches was the provision of live music by an angelic duo – pianist Linda Gossen and vocalist Sonia Zacharias.

Of course, the theatre portion is only half the equation in a "dinner theatre" presentation. The superb meal prepared by Creative Catering was indescribably tasty. It's no wonder people keep coming back year after year to take in these productions. It's great entertainment, and it shows how professional a community theatre performance can be.