

# Self Help gets last laugh



GARY SMITH

**N**orm Foster is not, alas, actor proof. Even the best of his comedies, it seems, require direction and staging that points up punchlines.

A Foster cast worth its salt has got to find ensemble energy to drive comedy home. When the rhythm isn't right, the momentum fails and the farce falls flight.

Take Self Help as a case in point. The hilarious comedy is about two broken-down actors who tire of flogging themselves silly in dinner theatre and set out to make a mint. How? By becoming self-help gurus.

Of course they hit it big. With success comes the lifestyle possible with big bucks. Everything is pretty groovy. That is until sex enters the picture.

When Cindy Savage has it off with the gardener more than petunias begin to sprout. There's a body in the study, a detective in the hall and a nosy journalist on the stairs. Things whirl dizzily out of control. At least they should.

## Showtime

**What:** Self Help

**Who:** Aldershot Players

**Where:** West Plains United Church, 549 Plains Road W.

**When:** April 14-16, 22-23 at 8 p.m.

Dinner at 6:30 p.m. Show only April 14

**Tickets:** With dinner \$30

**Phone:** 905-381-1441

Trouble is that the Aldershot Players go at this racy stuff in a pace that's too slow.

Director Sam Sidawi allows too many laughlines to go plop by not insisting his actors time them just right. Even though this Foster comedy clocks in at just about two hours with intermission, there is a sense it's been playing much longer.

In this comedy, Foster is making no powerful statements. He's not even suggesting a sense of affection for his

characters. Everything here is pointed toward having fun and the success or failure of the evening must be judged, I suppose, by that.

Well, The Aldershot Players got some of their laughs and they did send their audience home happy. By that standard, I suppose their Self Help was a success.

Lisa Hiemstra had fun with the role of Cindy and had easily the most polished presence on the Aldershot stage. Her partner in deception, the ebullient Scott Broe, worked hard to keep Hal Savage believable throughout. He needed a tad more twinkle and a more energetic sense of attack.

Bev Mattson was a hit with the audience as the Savage's increasingly agitated maid. At times she seemed to be doing Carol Burnett crossed with Vicki Lawrence.

*Gary Smith has been reviewing theatre and dance for the Hamilton Spectator for more than 25 years.*

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