

## **CENTENNIAL CASTING**

By Gino Dilorio and Nancy Bleemer

Virginia Stage Company

Oct. 21-Nov. 9

For tickets: (757) 671-8100

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

I always anticipate going to new plays in hopes of seeing a work destined to be a theatre classic being born. It rarely happens, but I remain optimistic. Once again, in this instance, the miraculous event didn't occur. In days of yore, plays like this one toured cities near New York (Boston, Philadelphia, New Haven). If successful out of town, they opened on Broadway. If not, a discreet notice appeared in the press saying "closed out of town".

I think that's what would have happened to this play. It has an identity crisis. Neither the writers, Gino Delorio and Nancy Bleemer, nor the director Chris Hanna, can decide whether it is a farce, comedy or comedy drama. Hanna frantically tries different approaches ranging from straight forward realism in the opening scene to an amateurish take-off of a film director in another and lots of clichéd bimbo type stuff in others.

If you look up the word "casting" in your dictionary, you'll find several definitions. Two of them are: the assignment of parts and duties to actors and something cast in a mold. There in lies the germ of this would be "whatever". Someone looks up casting in the yellow pages and sends a resume of an actress to Centennial Casting. It is of course a place where metal is poured into molds. The guys who work there decide to trick an actress into coming in as a way for their boss to meet a woman. They clean up the cluttered office mysteriously dominated by a large poster of Frank Sinatra. I'm not sure why.

The actress, played in a confused manner by Deborah La Coy, is lured into the scheme. It's not her fault that she seems confused. One assumes her character, Edie Kenton, is not a very talented actress and is pretty dumb to boot. However, that is never made clear. It would be a stronger play for me if she were a good performer who trusted these guys. This would make the situation more believable and truthful, and add pathos and a little depth. Now there is little or no conflict. Not much happens and abruptly at the end boy gets girl and the curtain comes down or rather the lights go out

All the other performers exert admirable effort but they don't have much to put their shoulders to. The sad fact is that this theatrical attempt is not ready at this stage of its life for prime time.

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