

PLAY: Caliber of acting and set design, costumes all top notch

Continued from 1C

We find out soon enough that there's trouble indeed. Nora confesses to her old friend Christine, played with warmth and a solid sense of morality by Gerry Sanseviero, that she has forged a signature on a note to get the money she needed to take her ailing husband on a life-saving convalescent trip.

In the 1800s, a woman could not get a loan in her own name without her husband's permission, but Nora has broken the law out of love for her husband.

Ibsen sets up the classic clash between male and female conceptions of morality: what comports with the letter of the law vs. what is done from the highest motives of caring. It's a clash we still face in personal and political choices today.

The lender, Krogstad (an ominous, aggrieved George Diehl Jr.) draws the noose tighter around Nora, threatening to tell her husband of her crime.

In her struggles to get free of this noose, Nora learns that her indulgent, admiring husband, Torvald, ultimately values his honor more than their marriage. He's infuriated by his wife's behavior.

He thinks only of his reputation. She sees, at last, that she cannot live with him any longer.

David Micelli is an excellent Torvald, stern, handsome, delighted with his playful "skylark" of a wife, but quick to give an order that must be obeyed. Even when he offers to forgive her, he says, "To forgive is to possess." We see that his self-regard overwhelms every other impulse. He cannot change.

In contrast to the play's major theme — Nora grows in understanding and so breaks with Torvald — Christine and Krogstad enact a fascinating

Epiphany, an Equity company new to Saratoga Springs, chose "A Doll House" for its debut on the basis of a community vote, so if this production has a feel of "This is good medicine for you; take a big swallow," we must remember we're getting what we asked for.

and unexpected minor theme. Christine, a working woman who has struggled to take care of herself, moves toward becoming a home-maker and the mother of Krogstad's orphaned children.

This evil, desperate man turns out to be human after all, and so provides the play with a twist we couldn't have anticipated.

Another twist comes from Dr. Rank, a family friend and too-serious admirer of Nora, who might save her from Krogstad's intended blackmail, but, in the end, is rebuffed by the newly self-aware Nora.

Alex Moggridge plays Rank with great sensitivity and sadness, a good foil to the stonier characters of the other men.

Four local youngsters are rotating in the roles of Nora's children.

In last Sunday's matinee,

Taylor Farrier and Timothy J. Maggs hit their marks nicely and did what was expected of them.

Rotch's set expands the trim little New Visions Theater and comments on the play's theme by mounting two larger-than-life Kate Greenway type drawings of happy home scenes on the walls. Another sweet, but ironic touch, is the floral stenciling on the inside of the Helmers' front door — just like a doll house.

Elegant costumes by Amelia Dombrowski define the period and the characters. The music and lighting are unobtrusive, which is a compliment to the designers, Nathaniel Fox Beversluis and Meghan Marrer.

Ken Kaissar directed with an unbending eye on the main theme.

Epiphany is a New York City-based professional company looking to make a home in Saratoga Springs.

It is a pleasure to see acting and design at this level right in our backyard. I look forward to their spring production, but, I confess, I hope it will be a lighter play.

"A Doll House," presented by Epiphany Theater Company, continues through Nov. 11 at New Visions Theater at BOCES on Henning Road, Saratoga Springs. Curtain times are 8 p.m. Oct. 27, 28, Nov. 1, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10 and 11; at 7 p.m. Oct. 26 and Nov. 2; and at 2 p.m. Oct. 29, Nov. 5 and 11. Tickets are \$35 adults/\$20 senior citizens/\$10 students, general seating. Post-performance talks follow Sunday matinees, Oct. 29 and Nov. 5 and Fridays, Nov. 3 and 10. Free babysitting on site Thursday, Nov. 3. Call: (877) 238-5596 toll-free or visit the Web site at www.smarttix.com for tickets.