

Arts & Entertainment

'Fools' Opens Season at Carlson Park,

Electra Slated for this Weekend

By Beverly Summo

A delighted crowd was on hand for the opening of the inaugural season of the new Culver City Public Theatre in Carlson Park.

First in the series was "Fools," by Neil Simon, which was followed by Sophocles' Greek tragedy, "Electra," performed on Aug. 7 - 8. It will play again this weekend.

The new company is under the artistic direction of Stephen Moore.

The season began with a little-known but hilarious play by Simon, entitled "Fools," set in a remote Ukrainian village where all the townspeople are under a spell cursed with chronic stupidity.

Parry Jay King played Leon Tolchinsky, an earnest young schoolmaster hired to educate the people and break the curse, who finds the problem much worse than feared.

These are seriously stupid people from the postman who only grudgingly parts with the mail to the sheep loser who suggests the sheep be told his address so they can find him.

Under Simon's facile pen and with a company of actors who have raised stupidity (or possibly lowered it) to a new level where actions, words and situations that sound just plain dumb become laugh-out-loud funny, somehow it worked.

King was a delight as the idealistic teacher running into situations with a

bunch of dim bulbs that only a sweet soul like Tolchinsky could handle.

Scarlino.

Their joy in announcing that their



Culver City Public Theatre, presents Neil Simon's "Fools." (l-r) Perry Jay King, Maria Hill, Eugene Lebowitz and Lynda Scarlino.

Among them: Dr. Zubritsky (who never saw the inside of a medical facility), played with the fervor of a deep thinker by Eugene Lebowitz.

Matching him in eagerness, his wife Lanya, the slightly off-center Lynda

young daughter finally learned the art of sitting down, tells a lot about Sophia, pretty, empty-headed, but rather sweet, as played by Maria Hill.

David A. Arnold was a striking figure as a likable villain, Gregor Yousekevitch,

who, along with the teacher, was in love with Sophia. He lives in a house on the hill and terrifies the villagers by throwing water on them after creating a terrible rumbling noise. No use to tell them it's only thunder and rain. He has escaped the curse.

All of the villagers stretched the bounds of credulity to the limit but never went over the top, making their utter stupidity perfectly reasonable.

Among them are the magistrate played by Eric Billitzer, a peddler played by Yvonne Golomb, Kyle Nudo as the postman, Randy Simer as Mishkin and Penelope Lowder as Yenchna.

Needless to say there is a happy, if completely confused, ending with, I think, Sophia and the schoolmaster hitched.

Director Kathy Fitzpatrick kept everything going at a crisp pace, using her actors to full advantage.

Culver City Public Theatre is a repertory group, dedicated to bringing free classical theatre to the park — in this case, Carlson Park, its home since 1987.

Admission is free and there's plenty of street parking, so bring a blanket or a chair and enjoy. Curtain time is 2 p.m.

Carlson Park is on Braddock Drive, three blocks east of Overland Avenue.