

The Tournament Singers (photo right) perform a medley of Broadway songs at the Army Europe Tournament of Plays in Heidelberg for thespians and other military community theater volunteers (below).



Photo by Martin Greeson

Theaters celebrate their outstanding efforts with an annual night of glitz and glamour at the

Tournament of Plays

By Karl Weisel

104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

I'm still in shock," said Renee Favors, one of several local Topper winners at this year's Army Europe Tournament of Plays.

Favors, who earned one of the golden statuettes for her portrayal of Mrs. Pong (Best Actress in a Minor Role in a Comedy) in the Wiesbaden Amelia Earhart Playhouse produc-



Photo courtesy of the Amelia Earhart Playhouse

Jack Paramore and Alison Kerr struggle in the Wiesbaden theater's production of "Wait Until Dark," recognized as Army Europe's Best Drama.

tion of "The Primary English Class," said, "It's really awesome - I have it sitting on my desk at work."

Wiesbaden's theater was honored with four toppers including Best Drama — "Wait Until Dark;" Best Director of a Drama — Jerry Beatty and Skot Davis for "Wait Until Dark;" Best Actor in a Drama — Markus Michaelis in "Wait Until Dark" and Favors in "The Primary English Class."

Thespians, directors, technical crew and other military community theater volunteers were honored for their outstanding efforts at the annual bash in Heidelberg's Village Pavilion April 26. From nearly 200 nominations in various categories ranging from Best Choreography to Best Lighting for a Comedy, 74 people walked away bearing the coveted golden trophies.

"The Toppers are

an extra motivation for those involved in community theater," said Charlie Fontana, Entertainment Branch chief for the 221st Base Support Battalion. "Our volunteers put in a lot of extra effort all year round."

While people don't participate in theater to win awards, it's rewarding when they do, he said. "Getting involved in the theater is a wonderful team effort in a noncompetitive realm. During every show the cast and crew become a family. When you're away from your blood family it's a wonderful substitute."

"It's a great feeling to be recognized, especially doing it as a volunteer," said Beatty, winner of a best director Topper and former Amelia Earhart Playhouse director. Beatty, who now serves as a director for the USO in Wiesbaden, said it was a "nice experience" to continue his involvement with the theater he spent more than six years leading.

"I decided to do the show because it was already part of the season's schedule. ... It was a lot of work because I was starting a new job. I was fortunate with that show to have such a great group of people to work with," said Beatty. "All of the major actors and actresses were nominated for Toppers."

"I can't give them enough credit," he said. "I think it was very well cast. For a community production, it really was a very professional

show."

Beatty also praised the contributions of his co-director, Skot Davis, a budding playwright who has returned to the United States.

"I've been acting since I was in the third grade," said Favors, a human resource specialist with the City Colleges of Chicago in Wiesbaden. "I do a lot of backstage stuff — whatever comes along I do. This is my de-stressor. It's what I do for stress therapy — act and have fun. As long as they don't throw tomatoes and other foods at me, I'm OK."

Favors said getting involved in community theater is a guaranteed method of quickly becoming involved in a new community. "It's a great way into the community. It sounds like a cliché, but I like to give back to the community."

The theater is also a way to develop one's skills and potential — whether it's onstage or backstage, said Fontana. "Some people need a nice secure forum like the theater where they can get up in front of strangers. Other people don't need any help at all overcoming shyness problems and also enjoy the experience."

In addition to the Wiesbaden's theater's upcoming production of "Snoopy!!!" (see story on facing page), the theater features a Children's Summer Theater Workshop which will run from June 23 to Aug. 2. "It will culminate in a theatrical production," said Fontana. Youths interested in taking part should check with the theater staff to see if there are still openings.

"We're always looking for suggestions," he said. "We're always interested in having people get involved in whatever capacity they feel comfortable in." That can range from helping



Photo by Martin Greeson

'Snoopy!!!' the musical

'Peanuts' characters return to the stage in Wiesbaden theater production

Story and photos by Karl Weisel
104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

He's an amazing World War I fighter ace — at least in his own mind. He's a dog with high standards. He's frequently misunderstood by most of the non-canines who populate his universe.

If you haven't guessed by now, the beagle in question is none other than Snoopy, one of the regulars in Charles Schulz's long-running comic strip, "Peanuts." Like Charlie Brown before him, Snoopy can now claim his own Broadway musical.

Local theater-goers will have a chance to catch the musical hound and his many friends in action in May and June during the Wiesbaden Amelia Earhart Playhouse's production of "Snoopy!!!" the musical.

"Snoopy is a really complex beagle," said Charlie Fontana, the play's director and Entertainment Branch chief for the 221st Base Support Battalion. "He has big standout moments. The show features a cast of seven adults playing children."

Similar to Clark Gesner's stage version of the "Peanuts" characters, "You're A Good Man Charlie Brown," "Snoopy!!!" offers a wry look at the world of adults through the eyes of children — and in this case also a beagle and his feathered friend Woodstock.

Composer Larry Grossman and lyricist Hal Hackady teamed up to write the musical which opened in New York in 1982.

"We've made this contemporary so that it's appropriate to the times," said Sheri Elwood, who portrays Lucy Van Pelt. "There are great jokes and it's a lot of fun."

"It's a step up for me," said Elwood, explaining that she played Snoopy in a production of "You're A Good Man Charlie Brown." "I'm going up in species."

"Snoopy has so many different characters," said Klaus Krückemeyer, who portrays the title role. "He plays five or six different characters alone in one song. He's an all-American dog. He's lazy and laid back, but at the same time he has these incredible thoughts. When I found out how interesting the part was, I realized it was great as an actor to have the chance to explore so many different characters in one role."

Using only a few words and "small sentences," Snoopy makes very astute observations, said Krückemeyer. As do his cohorts in the musical including Glen Corlin as Charlie Brown, Pace Rubedean as Linus Van Pelt, Stacey Groves as Peppermint Patty, Lisa Bicknell as Sally Brown and Cathleen Kaufmann as Woodstock.

While children will enjoy the show,

"He's an all-American dog. He's lazy and laid back, but at the same time he has these incredible thoughts."



Peppermint Patty (played by Stacey Groves) gives Charlie Brown (Glen Corlin) some advice during a rehearsal for the Amelia Earhart Playhouse's "Snoopy!!!" Below: Sally Brown (Lisa Bicknell) tries to get Snoopy (Klaus Krückemeyer) to chase rabbits.

"Snoopy!!!" is by no means a children's show, said Fontana. Parents should consider whether their children are old enough to sit through quietly and enjoy the musical before purchasing tickets.

Like its predecessor, "Snoopy!!!" promises an upbeat, feel-good theatrical experience, cast members said.

It will be featured at the Amelia Earhart Playhouse May 22-26, 28-30, June 5-8 and 12-15 at 7:30 p.m. Call mil 336-2473 or civ (0611) 816 2473 to make reservations. Tickets can also be purchased at the USOs on Wiesbaden Army Airfield or the Hainerberg Shopping Center.

The Amelia Earhart Playhouse is located at Wiesbaden's Adenauer Ring 39.

