

10:35 p.m. 75186969; 10:35 p.m. 19227037
 The View Michael Badalucco, Kathy Mattea.
 (N) (3) 10 a.m. 96018; 10 a.m. 83582;
 10 a.m. 60360

WBMY	Friends (CC)	Drew Carey (N)	7th Heaven (N) (CC)	Roswell "The Morning After" (N)	Rosie O'Donnell (N) (CC)	Jenny Jones (N) (CC)	MacGyver "Hind-Sight" 897056	In the Heat of the Night (N)				
WGN	Full House (N)	Full House (N)	*** "Wild Hearts Can't Be Broken" (1991, Drama) 896209	News (N) (CC) 894969	News (N) (CC) 894969	News (N) (CC) 894969	News (N) (CC) 894969	News (N) (CC) 894969				
P.M.	6:00	6:30	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30

Cast, director excel in ASF's 'Seasons'

By Allan Swafford
 Special to the Advertiser

REVIEW

Capping its current, uneven repertory season with a breathtaking triumph, The Alabama Shakespeare Festival on Friday night opened a perfectly cast and dynamically directed production of Robert Bolt's incisive "A Man For All Seasons" to an enthusiastic audience.

"Seasons" is Bolt's impressionistic rendering of a tragedy in English history. Sir Thomas More, one of the geniuses of the age and a friend of its scholars and philosophers, was less fortunate in his friendship with the dangerously erratic English king, Henry VIII. When the pragmatic king decided to take control of the Church in his country in order to legalize his divorce from Catherine of Aragon, More, a man of conscience and principle in an age no more endowed with those qualities than our own, was caught between his devotion to his religion and his loyalty to his king and friend.

Henry's friendship was a gift anyone would be more blessed without. Because the king insisted on More's approval of his self-serving course of action, an approval More simply would not give, the philosopher ultimately was imprisoned and executed.

It is this nerve-racking battle of wills, a battle between conscience and compromise, both in its epic aspects and its domestic minutiae, that Bolt so powerfully dramatizes. In the ASF production the high drama — as well as the low comedy — finds the cast and mounting its genius merits. Actors whom we had previously recog-

nized as fine excel their own best to achieve the sort of sublime magic that sometimes touches theater. And this is true from the smallest role to the largest.

The genius More, an unusually complex human, was an unwilling martyr. While refusing to compromise his beliefs, he employed every legal and social ruse to avoid confrontation with the king. Philip Pleasants exquisitely externalizes this character's intricacies to our view. He leaves no cranny of this complexity unexplored as we watch More fall from exalted position to death by the headsman's ax.

A role second in difficulty only to More, The Common Man is More's foil. Blatant self-interest is the single motivation in this repulsive but compelling comic character. Chris Mixon gives us the character in all its revolting, protean attraction as a mirror of our baser selves. Shamefaced, we see ourselves.

Striking a middle ground between these two, Rodney Clark's Duke of Norfolk is an appealing creation. Sonja Lanzener's Lady

Alice More is a shattering characterization of a loving wife who is simply unable to understand her husband. Greg Thornton's myriad fans will glory in his triumphant creation of the ultimate villain, Thomas Cromwell, one of the actor's finest attainments. John Woodson's bluff, devious Henry is another stunning success, this one achieved in a single scene. Appearing briefly in several scenes, Wilson Cain builds a very human, incompetent Spanish ambassador, sometimes oily and other times comic.

Kent Thompson's sure, intelligent and insightful — one is tempted to say *loving* — direction lies at the heart of this totally triumphant production. He is greatly abetted by Charles Caldwell's masterly scenic design, which echoes the scene-change innovations of Bolt's ever delightful script.

Allan Swafford has reviewed local theater for more than 15 years. You can contact him by writing Allan Swafford, c/o the Montgomery Advertiser, 200 Washington Ave., Montgomery, AL 36104 or by faxing (334) 261-1548.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAYS

- Chad Allen, actor: 26
- Mark Wahlberg, actor: 29
- Kenny G, musician: 44
- Nicko McBrain, musician: 46
- Laurie Anderson, singer: 53
- Spalding Gray, actor: 59

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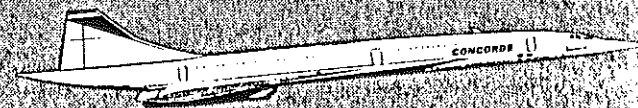
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