

Generous, Indeed It Is . . .

By GLENDA FRANK

When the "large and lovelies" competing in the Global Glamour Girl Beauty Pageant (televised live from Paris, Ohio) get down and belt out a song, "Pretty Faces," a hefty musical at Actors Outlet Theater, shimmies with fun.

From the lyrical fantasy "Furs, Fortune, Fame, Glamour" to the randy girltalk of "How Do You Like Your Men" and the tongue-in-cheek "Song for Jesus" ("I'm twirling for Jesus," sings Bobby-Joy), spirits run high and the stage rocks with generously endowed talent.

Take "Too Plump for Prom Night." The ballad becomes a Fifties sha-boom as the five other con-

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Photo/Les Carr

Kathleen Rosamond Kelly Is Bobby Joy in "Pretty Faces"

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testants rockstep into the harmonizing Plumpettes, back their bluesy lead singer (Heather A. Stokes), all the while a silver prom ball throws sparkles across the stage.

Comedy swoops in from the blue in "Solo for the Telephone" when the classy Paulette (Margaret Dyer) is so turned on by an obscene phone call that she strips to black garter belt and red lace panties as she hits high C.

But between numbers, we're face-to-face again with a second-rate plot and a parade of "fat Barbie dolls" modeling rainbow-bright costumes. The gypsies in "A Chorus Line" brought their heartaches and dreams to tug at our heartstrings, then vanished into the brutally competitive line. "Pretty Faces" takes us backstage too, but the stories claw only at our sentimentality and go for compassion, not respect. Anyone anticipating the rowdy energy and appetite of "Babes," Fox's new queensize situation comedy, will exit underfed.

A little reality, a little attendant bitterness might have gone a long way toward winning over an audience in these decades of diminishing respect for beauty contests. Instead, everyone's a winner. Bobby Joe, a stereotypical blonde ("sweet and empty as cotton candy") bags Carter (Michael Winther), the bumbling stage manager with rotten

timing. Monique, the first Global Glamour Queen, who models some stunning outfits with panache, learns to temper her hairtrigger jealousy and accept her muscle-man co-host and lover as is. And Pleasure, the girl Daddy ignored ("Daddy Doesn't Care"), does a Cinderella turn.

"Pretty Faces" is out-of-date corny, but it has charm. It forgives "the other girl next door/the little more you can adore" for overeating and admires her curves. It points a finger at other excesses: big egos, big risks ("We're taking chances," Jimmy Lee, the stage director, sings. "We're seeing beauty of many shapes and different kinds") and big talents. Ron Meier, the diminutive director who must turn these "left-footed milkmaids" into swans, cracks a charismatic whip

while Amy Jo Phillips, a Nell Carter hopeful, dreams of limousines and diamonds with her dark velvet voice that can bring down the rafters or caress an earlobe. She hits the high road in "Purple Hearted Soldiers," a full-throated lament for all those wounded in the battle of love.

As a concept, "Pretty Faces" has a strong off-beat appeal, but on stage it's clogged with clichés. Stopping to conquer, it rarely transcends its material.

"Pretty Faces: The Large and Lovely Musical" by Robert W. Cabell at Actors Outlet Theater (120 West 28 St.) Directed and choreographed by Gene Foote. Peter Rogness, sets; George Bergeron, costumes; Clifton Taylor, lighting; Jim Mironchik, musical direction. With Margaret Dyer, Lynn Halverson, Kathleen Rosamond Kelly, Liz Leisek, Charles Mandracchia, Ron Meier, Amy Jo Phillips, Amy Ryder, Heather Anne Stokes, and Michael Winther.