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Channing

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sing that song for the chief executive, who loved it. And so did President Clinton, she added. Tiddy boom cha!

That was the top of the sandwich. In the middle came a deftly executed monologue concerning Cecilia Sisson, the fictional star of "Mississippi Melody," who found fame fleeting. The way Channing told this, all the S's came out as whistles. Thus the phrase "star of the silent screen for seven years" was made to bring a belly yok, an outcome that Channing seemingly achieves at will.

The comedian then passed out her own Coveted Diamond Awards to top AIDS volunteers, stripping huge paste rings from her fingers, tossing them to the recipients and cuing the bottom of the sandwich, her totally boss rendition of "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend."

It was sensash, and for a finish, the star of the show smiled her 24-carat smile and tossed little paste diamond rings out into the benefit audience from a stash in her evening purse. This would have brought them to their feet if they hadn't been standing already on the dance floor in their 1920s outfits, applauding wildly.

'Demon'

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surrounding this aspect of the play is not only pertinent to today's environmental concerns, but at times sounds eerily modern.

But the doctor's effort to save the forest is only one part of a complex web of relationships. Wood Demon (Mark Harelik), as he's called, is secretly in love with Sonva (Nike Doukas), the daughter of Aleksander (a superb Dakin Matthews), a cranky landowner and retired professor. The professor is married to Yelena (Lorraine Toussaint), a beautiful and philosophical woman much younger than he who is being pursued by Zhorzh and Fedva (Lawrence Pressman and Eric Allan Kramer, both excellent), the first an embittered caretaker of the professor's estate, the latter an arrogant but warmhearted soldier.

These are the central characters in what at times resembles a wonderful Russian soap opera, except that the mind and understanding heart behind this opera is Chekhov's. Each character speaks directly from his or her impassioned Russian soul. Although the last act offers a too-neat wrap-up, the piece taken as a whole contains some of Chekhov's best writing.

Kalish

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also served as the SPE liaison for benefit premieres for Sony pictures, for the Sony Family Center and Sony Pictures Studios tours.

Kalish joined SPE in 1989 after serving for six years with the Guber Peters Entertainment Co.

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