

'Dunces' Comedy Premiers On Stage

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — A musical comedy version of *A Confederacy of Dunces* has premiered on the stage here, and the man who adapted the Pulitzer Prize novel says the production has found the seed for possibly even Broadway.

Frank Galati, whose production opened last weekend at Louisiana State University to good reviews, said John Kennedy Toole's oddball characters, who move through the darker side of New Orleans with pathos, were made to order for a musical comedy.

"The characters in the book are even revolting and Ignatius can be hideous, mean spirited and even cruel," said Galati. "But at the same time, there is a tremendous amount of energy in the characters and Ignatius particularly speaks with such eloquence and style that he seems ready to the book."

Ignatius P. Reilly is the fat and lazy central character, who would rather spend his life in his seedy bedroom and dream of the middle ages.

The local audience apparently agreed with Galati and the comedy's run through March 4 is nearly sold out.

The success is especially sweet for the LSU Press, which published the novel when nobody else would touch it and watched as the book got the Pulitzer for fiction in 1980.

The opening night also marked a special moment for the author's 82-year-old mother, who spent years trying to find a publisher after her son's 1969 suicide.

"This has been a beautiful evening in the American theatre," Mrs. Toole told the audience at the conclusion of the opening night.

Galeti said he's not sure whether there is life for his

stage adaptation after the LSU run, noting that a full scale professional production could cost \$5 million to \$6 million.

With the exception of New York professional Scott Harlan as Reilly, the cast consists of volunteers, most of them LSU students.

Galeti, a drama professor at Northwestern University, brought his Chicago connection with him, including choreographer Peter Amster and Edward Zelnis, who handled the music.

The show runs almost three hours and Galeti believes it's a half hour too long.

"The audience shouldn't be asked to sit that long," he said. "In order to make the ideal changes, we would need more money, more time and more orchestra rehearsals and we can't afford that."

"To improve a show you need time. I have been in the academic life all of my life and the real gap in training young people is they don't have the opportunity to be in something for a long period of time. A show must run for a while before the cast can get comfortable in it. I'm extremely proud of this cast, which has done so much in such a short period of time."

Galeti had only six months to put the whole thing together, including the six to seven weeks of rehearsal, which averaged out at three hours a day.

"I hope there is a life after LSU for the show but that depends on two things: The willingness of the gentlemen who own the professional rights to the novel and the willingness of producers and investors to come up with the kind of money needed to mount a professional production."