

SHAWNEE THEATRE

PAGE 6

BLOOMFIELD FREE PRESS

WEEK OF JUNE 20, 2007

Cooper brings levity to *Hank Williams* play

By Michael Johnson
Free Press Editor

BLOOMFIELD - For the second week in a row, Shawnee Theatre will present *Hank Williams: Lost Highway* this weekend.

Performances begin at 8 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and at 2 p.m. on Sunday.

One of the highlights of the show is the outstanding performance turned in by Shelly Cooper as Hank's young, relatively untalented wife Audrey.

What makes the performance a show stealer is the fact that Cooper has the voice of an angel in real life.

But while playing Audrey, she is singing out of her range, off key and generally out of tune.

Her uncomfortable struggles to fit in next to her superstar husband are obvious, as Cooper shows a great deal of depth in

playing the part.

She makes Audrey believable to anyone who has ever witnessed old films of former hillbilly singers - some who should have stuck to farming.

While the story of Hank Williams' rise and ultimate fall is somewhat depressing, Cooper brings a number of classic comedic moments, which lightens the mood and keeps the play moving.

On a more somber note, Cooper as Audrey, delivers one of what is sure to be this season's most moving scenes while addressing her late husband.

As she stands in the spotlight, she really makes one believe that Audrey Williams is up on stage, showing all the emotions associated with a woman still deeply in love with a man she simply couldn't live with.

This is Cooper's first year at

Shawnee Theatre. The 21-year-old Hanover College theater major received the Hanover College's President's Award in Vocal Music in 2005, 2006 and this year.

In the finale of the show, she finally gets to show her real talent as she breaks character and actually sings *I Saw the Light* like it was meant to be sung.

Cooper's performance, alone, is worth the price of admission - which is \$16 for adults.

Shawnee's next performance - beginning June 28 - will be Larry Shue's *The Nerd*. The uproarious comedy stars Shawnee veteran Terrence Monte and Ben Gougeon in the story of why one shouldn't make promises one doesn't necessarily expect to keep.

Tickets for all of Shawnee Theatre's summer entertainment opportunities are available by calling 384-3559.



Staff photo by J. Giles

Audrey Williams, played masterfully by Shelly Cooper, gets a reaction from her husband Hank Williams, portrayed by Kevin Guthridge at Shawnee Theatre.

Totem pole has new home

