

ILLINOIS THEATRE CENTER

They're second in the running . . . as far as getting the '80-81 season off the ground.

"They" are Illinois Theatre center, 400 Lakewood boulevard, Park Forest, which opens its fifth season on Friday with an 8:30 p.m. performance of the musical revue "Rodgers and Hart: A Musical Celebration."

The presentation features a sampling of the work of Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, who formed the most successful collaboration in the history of American musical theater. In 25 years' partnership, they wrote 28 stage musicals, eight motion picture musicals, one nonmusical play and a night club revue. Among their classics: "Manhattan," "Mountain Greenery," "Ten Cents a Dance," "The Lady Is a Tramp," "The Most Beautiful Girl in the World," "I Didn't Know What Time It Was," "Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered."

ITC's production includes six performers, five of whom are veterans of the theater. The sixth, Jeff Coopwood, was featured in the national tour of "Timbuktu." He also recently appeared in "Godspell" and "Man of LaMancha" at the Melody Top theater, Milwaukee, and for Kenley Players in Ohio. He also has extensive background in opera, having performed in "Boris Godonov" with Cesare Siepi, "Otello" with Jon Vickers, "Fanciulla del West" with Carol Neblett, "Madame Butterfly" with Renata Scotto and "La Boheme" with Luciano Pavarotti.