

Thursday, July 30, 1981

# Musical receives young inspiration

By Katie Kerwin  
staff writer

Backstage during Will-O-Way Theatre's "Damn Yankees," the musical's two choreographers anxiously listen to the performance — shuffle by kick by step.

"It's funny — I don't think of the music. I think of the steps we wrote," said Leslie Farrell of Troy.

Ms. Farrell, 17, and her partner, Dondra Haesler, 16, of Bloomfield Hills are considerably younger than most of the dancers they direct. With only the experience of choreographing one musical, "Grease," at Lahser High School last year, the pair have arranged and directed a full-scale adult amateur production which relies heavily on dancing.

"YOU HAVE to establish yourself — be aggressive," Ms. Haesler said. "You have to say, 'OK, guys, we really know what we're doing, even though it may not look like it.'"

"Public relations is important. You've got to know how to handle peo-

**'We're finished with everything, but you always want to drill it one more time. I'm sure if we did it 1,000 times, there would always be something we'd want to change.'**

— Choreographer Leslie Farrell

ple. If you say the wrong thing, you'll get on their bad side."

Despite their youthful appearance and intermittent bursts of giggles, the choreographers have an air of self-confidence and authority. But they occasionally express surprise in the cooperation they've gotten.

"I can't believe how much trust Will-O-Way's put in us," Ms. Haesler said. "When you think about it, here's two high school girls who have done only one show."

The pair choreographed "Grease" under the direction of Maureen Feder, who plays the lead role of Lola in "Damn Yankees." Ms. Feder suggested they be given the job of choreographing the Will-O-Way show.

"When Maureen first asked us to do

it, I think Will-O-Way was a little scared. They didn't know if they could trust these high school girls," Ms. Farrell said.

EQUIPPED WITH a tape recording of the "Damn Yankees" music — a show they had acted and danced in at Lahser a year ago — the duo began planning the dance routines.

"We'd go over to Dondra's and dance in the garage," Ms. Farrell said, grimacing as she imagined the neighbors' reaction.

"She's the technique and I'm the brains," she said, explaining that she will often think up a dance number and her partner will polish the rough spots.

The dance numbers were planned with the ability and experience of the dancers in mind, they said. When they first tried choreographing, they'd made the routines as tricky and unusual as possible, but they've learned since then, Ms. Haesler said.

"You can make things look real good — they don't have to be hard," she said. Unlike teen-age after-school actors and actresses who are usually eager to end rehearsals and go home, the Will-O-Way cast was more willing to practice a bit one more time to perfect the dance, the choreographers said.

"That's the big difference," Ms. Farrell said. "People will pull you aside to ask for a little help."

WITH THE SHOW already open, the choreographers' work is done, except for a little polishing between performances.

"We've finished with everything, but you always want to drill it one more time," Ms. Farrell said. "But I'm sure



Anita Barone (left) of Birmingham, Shayla McGurk of Bloomfield Hills and Lorraine Poirier of Birmingham work with choreographer Leslie Farrell of Troy.

if we did it 1,000 times, there would always be something we'd want to change."

Both young women said they'd like to make a career of dance.

"I'm too much of a ham to give it up," said Ms. Farrell, who has studied jazz for four years, and ballet and tap for two.

Ms. Haesler has been dancing since she was 3. She's had seven years of ballet training and six of jazz.

"I would really love to be on stage," she said of her career goals. "I would love to dance — I'd love nothing more than that."

The pair perform in one number in "Damn Yankees," a mambo with Lola.

The show continues on Friday and Saturday nights at 8:30 p.m. through Sept. 5 at Will-O-Way, 775 W. Long Lake

Road in Bloomfield Hills. Tickets are \$5.

For information, call 644-4418.

## Theater students perform play 'Dick Whittington'

The third and final performance of "Dick Whittington and His Cat" will be presented at 8 tonight at Cranbrook's outdoor Greek Theater, 400 Lone Pine Road, Bloomfield Hills.

"Dick Whittington" is the opening show in the 40th season of summer productions.

The play was dramatized by the late Carl G. Womberger especially for the theater school. It features 102 students, ages 9-13, divided among three casts. Each cast has its own staff of directors under the supervision of Cathy Cliff,

head of the six-week division. Dennis Shepherd, technical director, has designed the fanciful setting executed by the stage crew, while artist Jane Knight and her crew have provided the costumes.

Productions by the older students will include "The Divine Flora," a comedy by Florence Ryerson and Colin Clements at 8:30 p.m. Tuesday-Wednesday; Conrad Selzer's comedy "Our Girls" at 8:30 p.m. Aug. 7-8; and Joseph Caldwell's drama "The Cock-Eyed Kite" at 8:30 p.m. Aug. 11-12.

## West Bloomfield festival looking for entertainers

The West Bloomfield Fall Festival committee is seeking musicians and dancers for the festival, Sept. 11-13.

Those interested should pick up an application at the West Bloomfield Public Library and return it by Aug. 1. For more information or to volunteer for other festival duties, call 851-7093. The festival will be held on the

grounds of Henry Ford Hospital in West Bloomfield. This venture is non-profit and there is no admission charge.

The festival is sponsored by the West Bloomfield Fall Festival committee. The outdoor event will feature performers in short concerts and workshops. Performers will have a stage to perform on and sound system, but no piano.

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