

Live theater is what Diana Canova loves best

By ETHEL SIMMONS

Filming the ABC-TV series "Soap" takes six or seven months of the year. The rest of the time Diana Canova, who portrays Corinne, can do what she wants — live theater.

And that's exactly what will be happening when Ms. Canova and Steve Landesberg open today (Monday) at the Birmingham Theatre in Jules Feiffer's revue "Hold Me!"

The Birmingham Theatre, now producing its own shows, will present "Hold Me!" as the first offering of its second season. Aubrey Berg is directing the show, originally presented off-Broadway.

"THIS WILL BE quite a different production than the original one," Ms. Canova said. The show features a cast of five, all heavily involved in the sketches.

"It's a very difficult show," she said. "It's high energy."

Ms. Canova has been rehearsing all day and evening for the last two weeks. Steve Landesberg, her co-star (Dietrich on TV's "Barney Miller"), arrived last week to join rehearsals.

On a recent morning, just before rehearsal, Ms. Canova talked about herself and the show. She donned a pair of shaded specs and, with a smile, asked the photographer to take her from the left side "this morning."

Ms. Canova said she studied stage for five years. "Any type of theater you



Diana Canova wants to do "quality things."

have to be trained for. It's a lot harder than TV," she said.

Asked about her recent role on TV's "Fantasy Island," where she played one of two girlfriends on a shopping spree, Ms. Canova just shrugged.

This was her third appearance in a "Fantasy Island" episode. In one she was carried off by Sonny Bono, who

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— Actress Diana Canova

played a pirate. She does these shows, she said, mostly to get to know the other performers.

SHE IS INTERESTED in doing "quality things," and has a higher opinion of the part she does on "Soap." Isn't "Soap" just a nighttime soap opera, she was asked.

"It's a spoof on soap operas," she said. The character of Corinne "started out as a nymphomaniac, chasing a priest in love with me."

Ms. Canova is the daughter of a famous funnywoman, Judy Canova. "We're so different. I didn't see a lot of her work until her films," she recalled.

The young actress was raised in Hollywood, with a strict Catholic father. "I grew up like any other kid," she said. "I'm very grateful for it."

She takes her work "very seriously." It's the most important thing to me. I just want to do good products, I'm shooting for feature films and the theater."

Ms. Canova and comedian Landesberg are appearing together for the



TV personality Diana Canova of "Soap" talks about her Birmingham Theatre dressing room. (Staff photos by Dick Kelley)

first time on stage in "Hold Me!" A twosome who first met on "Hollywood Squares," they have been together for eight months.

She said Landesberg was one of her favorite stand-up comics, even before she met him.

Doing "Hold Me!" she wondered how it would be performing together. "He's just another actor in the show," she

said. "We have some scenes together that maybe are better because we're involved."

DESCRIBING LANDESBERG Ms. Canova said, "He's always very quietly funny. He's a joy to be around."

Three or four years ago she got into Scientology. She was looking for some-

thing and found Scientology was the approach to life she needed, she said.

"Everyone asks, 'Are you clear?' (the ultimate god in Scientology). Is she? 'Not yet,' she responded serenely.

Describing the teachings, Ms. Canova said, "Just that it's possible to expand as an individual and take responsibility for any action you take."

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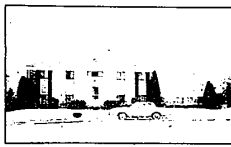
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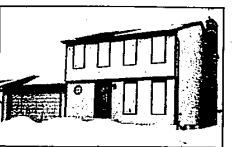
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