

Attic Theater building success

By TOM PANZENHAGEN

with continuing to grow."

Ferrer, one of the co-founders of the troupe — first known as Roadside Attractions out of Ann Arbor — said the Attic Theater gained some legitimacy with its initial Detroit production in December 1976.

Before then "we were just a group of Meadowbrook Acting School graduates who wanted to gain some experience, but with no idea of what went into the non-acting side of theater," Ferrer said.

Roadside's first offering was on St. Patrick's Day 1975. A year and several showings later the company all but disbanded. Several of the actors thought they were ready to make it on their own, and set out for points east.

But Lavinia Moyer came to Detroit, instead, and with Ferrer's help began the Attic Theater in Greentown.

That first production late in '76 won the troupe recognition through reviews in the Detroit News and Free Press, Ferrer said, and a mini-grant from the Michigan Council for the Arts.

After that "we just kept growing and growing . . . getting more and more telephones," Ferrer said. Then came additional grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ford and General Motors foundations and others. And it was on to bigger and better things.

THE NEW ATTIC Theater seats as many as 200 (depending on the production), has a larger stage area and better sight lines. The company has taken out a five-year lease on its new home, and is also the only tenant (unlike at the old Attic), which will minimize outside noise during performances.

In sum, the theater has had good luck in Greentown — the company could have moved to a downtown Detroit theater, but opted for the Greentown setting. So now, Ferrer and other Attic directors agree, it's time to give something back to the Detroit area's theater community.

Acting workshops have been held off and on since the winter of '76, according to Ferrer.

Former resident stars in 'Ashes'

Betsy Marion, formerly of Birmingham and most recently of New York City, is featured in the female lead of the Attic Theater production of "Ashes" by David Rudkin.

The show opens Friday and runs through June 9. The powerful British drama is a contemporary work portraying a couple's frustrated attempts to conceive a child and the often humiliating medical tests and procedures they must undergo.

ing to Ferrer, but attention has turned to a genuine acting school.

Supported largely by a another grant from the Michigan Council for the Arts, the Attic's new acting school will hopefully "cultivate Detroit's acting talent before it goes to the East Coast," Ferrer said.

Ferrer cited Bill Clyne as one "graduate" of an Attic Theater workshop. Clyne, Ferrer said, was not known to the Attic regulars before he participated in one of the workshops. Now Clyne has a leading role in "Ashes."

"ASHES," a contemporary work by Rudkin, had its American premiere in 1977 with Joseph Papp's New York Shakespeare Festival. It focuses on a young couple's frustrated attempts to have a child, and the often humiliating medical tests and procedures they must undergo.

The play runs Thursdays-Sundays from May 4 through June 9. Call 963-7789 for information about tickets and dinner at the Old Shilleagh.

"Starting Here, Starting Now" is the first offering of the Midnight Theater series. The off-Broadway review, co-written by Richard Maltby Jr. and David Shire, will run Thursdays through Sundays, May 5-8.

Maltby conceived and produced Broadway's "Ain't Misbehavin'" and Shire wrote music for "Saturday Night Fever."



Stealing a kiss

Ben Benson of Birmingham and Danni Oravec of Troy rehearse for the opening this weekend of Cole Porter's "Anything Goes" at Stagecrafters in Clawson. The production runs the first three weekends in May. Show dates are Thursday-Sunday, May 3-7; Thursday-Sunday, May 10-13; and Thursday-Saturday, May 17-19. Curtain time is 8:30 p.m., except Sunday at 7:30. For ticket information call the box office at 585-8437.



In 'Kismet'

John H. L. Watson of Birmingham is Hajji, the poet beggar, in the Windsor Light Opera Association production of "Kismet." Watson also is producer-director of the show. Two other area residents in the 30-year anniversary production are Fred Shulak of Southfield, as the Second Beggar, and Don Entwistle of Troy, as Jawan. Performances continue Friday, May 4; Sunday, May 6 (matinee); Friday, May 11; Saturday, May 12, and Sunday, May 13 (matinee) at the Cleary Auditorium in Windsor. For further information call the box office at 252-6455.

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