



Phil Marcus Esser appears at The Raven Gallery Wednesday, June 13, through Sunday, June 17.

Phil Marcus Esser stars at The Raven

Phil Marcus Esser, a mainstay on the metropolitan Detroit music scene, will appear in a rare solo engagement opening Wednesday, June 13, at the Raven Gallery in Southfield.

Esser will perform through Sunday, June 17. Showtime is 9:30 p.m. Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday; 9:30 and 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

About 10 years ago, Esser got off a bus in Detroit, fresh out of the Air Force, did a guest set at the Retort coffeehouse, was hired, and has made Detroit his professional base ever since.

The late '60s was a golden age for folk in Detroit and Esser became one of the most respected and popular performers. He appeared regularly at the Retort, the Chessmate, the Raven Gallery and was a mainstay at the Living End, where he appeared with performers like Joni Mitchell, Gordon Lightfoot, the Irish Rovers, and Odette, and in concert with Judy Collins.

Then in 1972, Esser earned the title of "Mr. Detroit Dinner Theater." His production of "Jacques Brel Is Alive and Well and Living in Paris," at Mercy College, started it all.

ESSER, ALONG with the rest of the cast — Charlie Latimer, Barbara Bredius and Mary Ann Paquette — won critical and public acclaim.

Night Life

After co-authoring and directing "Personals," a musical he appeared in for 16 months, Esser starred in "Scorpio/Scorpio," a one-man tour de force.

The year 1977 was spent singing and dancing as Michael in "I Do, I Do," and then finished the year at the True Grist Dinner Theater in Homer as El Gallo in "The Fantastics," which sold out for the entire six-week run.

In 1978, Esser reunited with Charlie Latimer, Barbara Bredius and Mary Ann Paquette at Villorito's Dinner Theater in new productions of "Jacques Brel" and "Personals," which recently closed after almost a year's run.

The Raven Gallery is located at 29101 Greenfield.

Following Esser's engagement, Corky Siegel — formerly of the Siegel-Schwartz Blues Band — will appear at The Raven Friday-Sunday, June 22-24. Show times for Siegel will be 8:30 and 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday; 7:30 p.m. Sunday. For reservations call 557-2622.

Musical 'Pippin' running

Creative choreography and colorful costuming highlight True Grist's newest production, the musical, "Pippin," through July 1 at the Homer, Mich., Dinner Theater.

"Pippin," which enjoyed a run of more than four years on Broadway, is a blend of medieval pageantry and modern music. The brainchild of composer-lyricist Stephen Schwartz, best known for "Godspell," "Pippin" tells the classic tale of a young man's search for fulfillment, within a dazzlingly theatrical kaleidoscope of spectacle, style and show stoppers.

Paul Hopper stars as Pippin in the True Grist production. A resident company veteran, Hopper has been seen in a variety of roles at the mill. He debuted in last summer's "Two by Two" and also was the harassed nephew in "The Sunshine Boys."

Appearing opposite Hopper as the Leading Player is Andrea Montgomery, a Toledo performer. The leading player portrays a multitude of parts during the show and is the role created by Ben Vereen in

the original production.

The True Grist Resident Company, greatly expanded for the summer season of musicals, includes Karine Beesley and Neal Bearman, currently seen in "Same Time, Next Year." Returning for her second summer season is Sherry Tuckett, last seen in Moliere's "The Learned Ladies."

Also returning to the company is Barbara Stark, Nurse of "The Sunshine Boys." She will act as Dance Captain for the summer season.

Another veteran back on the mill stage is Karl Trapp. Trapp last appeared as the slightly sleazy handyman, Pilot, in True Grist's holiday show, "Something's Afoot."

Resident company newcomers include Paul Kerr of Detroit who has appeared with the city's Attic Theater; Tim Roby, a Central Michigan University graduate, who will play Charlemagne, Pippin's father, and Jackie Karasok of Fort Wayne's PIT theater who will play Catherine, Pippin's ultimate love interest.

Dancers giving recital

The Jack Barnes Dance Centers will present their students in a recital, "Dancin' from N.Y. to L.A.," at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 5 at Seaholm High School in Birmingham.

The recital is the first in a series of three to be given during June. The Birmingham studio represents students from the area, including the city of Birmingham, West Bloomfield and Troy.

"Dancin' from N.Y. to L.A." is the theme chosen for the Birmingham studio. Music and choreography were coordinated from Broadway shows and movies.

The show will open with selections from "A Chorus Line." Dances from "The Sound of Music," "The

Wiz," "Dancin'," "Saturday Night Fever," and "The Turning Point" will be performed.

Mary Melone, of Birmingham, choreographed the Broadway-style revue in which 25 women dance to Broadway melodies. Holly Beth Washin, also of Birmingham, will present routines in ballet, modern jazz and disco. Cynthia Sharpe will present ballet performances.

In one number six mothers and daughters will tap dance to the music of "Me and My Shadow."

Tickets for the Seaholm performance will be available at the door. The other performances will be at West Bloomfield High School on Thursday, June 14, and at Warren High School, Troy, on Saturday, June 16.

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