

Curtain calls

Troy Players grows with burgeoning community

By DONALD V. CALAMIA

In an area filled with several well-established community theaters, the Troy Players has become one of metro Detroit's fastest-growing community theaters.

"We're a relatively young group compared to most of the other community theaters in the area," said the players' president, Dave Hubbard of Troy.

"But we're building something of importance here. We're a group that's growing and active in our community. We firmly believe community theater is an important part of community life and we're trying to perpetuate that idea here in Troy."

The Troy Players boasts 85 members. "That's nearly three times the number we had two or three years ago," Hubbard said.

"When I first joined the group about three years ago, I'd tell people I was a member of the Troy Players and they'd respond, 'What diamond do you play on?' More and more people are now hearing about us, and consequently,

more people from within the community are joining the group."

The Troy Players is an open and casual group, Hubbard said, with members coming from several area communities.

"IN FACT, that's what first drew me to the Troy Players," he said. "No other group with which I've been involved has had the kind of spirit the players have."

Auditions are open to the general public, though non-members who receive roles must join the group.

"And you don't have to be recommended by anyone to join us, either," Hubbard said. "While some groups might dismiss someone with little or no theater experience, we'll take that inexperienced person and work at developing his skills."

"It's interesting to note that many people who are now acting and directing with other groups got their start with the Troy Players."

"While we're not a well-endowed

group, we have to put our shows together on a shoestring budget, which does not hurt the quality of our shows a bit. It takes everything we've got to put up a show. With a group our size, there's no time to fool around."

After spending its first seven seasons performing in various middle schools throughout Troy, the players recently moved into the Troy Community Center behind City Hall.

"THE CITY has been quite cooperative with us, and we're trying to reciprocate. Any theater group demands a lot from whatever facility it's in," Hubbard said.

While the Community Center was still in its early planning stages, the Troy Players was among several groups in the city that were asked for input on the building's design.

"The city could not afford a separate auditorium in the complex. What they wanted was a room that could be utilized as a theater, a banquet hall, and for various other uses. Though we don't

have any wing or fly space, we've at least got the doors where we need them," Hubbard said.

The Troy Player is a non-profit, self-supporting corporation. It receives no funding from Troy or from other outside sources. All of its income is derived from membership dues and ticket sales.

"In fact," Hubbard said, "we doubled our attendance at our last show, 'South Pacific.' With costs rising the way they are, we're hoping that'll continue."

Since moving into the Community Center, the Troy Players has been exposed to other groups active in the city. "Most of our people within the players are under 35 years of age, and one of our biggest problems is that our people get offered transfers and promotions, which force them to leave the group. With them goes the experience we've been able to develop," Hubbard said.

"NOW THAT we're in the Community Center, we're coming together with

such groups as the Senior Citizens. In fact, one evening our scenic painter was working on the sets when one of the senior citizens walked into the room and began watching her.

"In a short time he was, by virtue of his own vast experience, giving her suggestions as to how to improve what she was doing. Though this man had no previous theater experience, he soon joined group."

"We need older members such as this to share with us their knowledge and experience."

Since assuming the role of president nearly two years ago, Hubbard has seen the Troy Players grow internally, as well as in numbers. "Two years ago, we had one person leading the group with eight helpers. The poor president was run ragged by his duties. Now we've got nine people running the group, each with his own set of helpers," he said. "Now we're really on the verge of taking off."

AMONG OBJECTIVES the Troy Play-

ers hope to achieve is development of a children's theater, utilizing the talent within the city's elementary, middle and senior high schools. The players also would like to develop a series of seminars on areas such as set construction for members who want to learn about the different areas of theater.

And, of course, the Troy Players would like a facility of its own.

"We're over our infancy now," Hubbard said, "and we're to a point where the other theater groups in the area acknowledge our presence by attending out shows. As the city is growing, so are we. No matter how large we get to be, though, our main purpose in life will always be to put on dramatic plays for the benefit of the community at large."

The Troy Players next attraction will be the comedy "The Impossible Years" on May 9-11, 16-17. For ticket information call 878-1235. For membership information call Joyce Hubbard at 879-7415.

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Charlilyn Surlana of New Berry (left), Loni Pryce of Rochester as Kate and Jerry Back of Union Lake as Batista are in the cast of Oakland University's "Kiss Me Kate."

3 varied shows open on campus

Oakland University salutes spring with music, dance and mime in three major productions this week in Varner Hall and the Barn Theater on the campus near Rochester.

The Department of Music presents "Kiss Me, Kate" opening Thursday for a two-weekend run in the Studio Theater.

The School of Performing Arts celebrates its first annual Dance Theater Concert Friday-Saturday in Varner Recital Hall.

OU's Resident Mime Company opens with "Jertrigg" Thursday for a two-weekend run.

"Kiss Me, Kate," Cole Porter's light-hearted musical comedy, on the Studio Theater stage is highlighted by the Meadow Brook Estate singers. Estate choreographer Steve Rivers, who is a multi-talented actress and singer, dancer in her own right, directs the cast of 20 in such songs as "Wonderbar," "So In Love" and "Hate Men."

Other performances in the Studio Theater are at 8 p.m. Friday and April 11-12, 17-19 Sunday matinees are at 2:30 p.m. April 13 and 6:30 p.m. April 20 Wednesday matinees are at 1 p.m. April 9 and 16.

THE DANCE THEATER program gives its first annual Student-Faculty Concert as part of the newly established School of Performing Arts. Dance faculty Robert Warren and Shannon Jenkins premiere new modern dance works entitled "Centerpiece" and "Feet by Feet." Guest Harbinger Dance Company artists Phil McPhee and Beth Velich perform versions of Aaron Copland's "Rodeo" and "Appalachian Spring" choreographed by OU Dance Theater faculty. Students also will interpret short, original pieces.

Concerts in Varner Recital Hall are at 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday with a matinee, at 2:30 p.m. Saturday.

All tickets for Sunday matinees are 99 cents. For tickets and reservations call 377-2000. Group rates are available.



Members of the dance company prepare for their upcoming Student-Faculty Concert on the OU campus. (Staff photo by David Frank)

Record company hopes to be bigger than Motown

By JIM WINDELL

Joseph Rosanova Jr., president of Rosanova Productions Inc., in Southfield, has a tired look about him, even at 9 o'clock in the morning.

If his eyes have a droopy look and he seems a bit weary, he may have a right to be. He's been fighting for an idea since 1972. That was the year Joe Rosanova decided to drop out of the music rat race, head back to Detroit and do what he always wanted to do — form his own record company.

Almost anyone can do that, but, his vision was grander. He dreamed of a successful record company in the Detroit area.

As everyone knows, there is only one really successful record company associated with Detroit. A few years back, that company got into motion pictures and hit the road for L.A.

"What Motown did was incredible," Rosanova said, as he leaned over his cluttered desk one morning recently. "That was a success. It stands on its own. Everyone, no matter what color or nationality, was proud of Motown."

"I'D LIKE TO recapture that part of what Motown did for this whole metro area."

He believes there is a definite void in Detroit and the Midwest. "I feel that in Detroit there is more talent and creative people than almost anywhere else. But, they've always had to go to another city to prove themselves. The talent pool is unlimited in Detroit. It's like finding a gold mine," Rosanova said.

Rosanova Productions Inc. is at 12233 W. 10 Mile Road. The whole idea behind the production company

was to mine the ore from that gold mine and market it to entertainment-hungry Detroiters. But like the struggle to find a gold mine, the dream merely existed on a fantasy level without significant progress toward reality.

"We started putting it together in 1972," Rosanova said, as he gave a detailed narrative of a trying and exhausting eight years. "That's when we began the physical work, applying for licenses and getting people involved."

In 1973, the first prospectus was filed with the Security Bureau for the proposed company, a publically held corporation. It was not until May 1977 that the Security Bureau allowed the fledgling company the right to begin selling stock.

ROSANOVA EXPLAINED the reason for the delay. "The Security Bureau had no rule of thumb to go by. There was no company like this ever set up in Michigan. Besides, we were new and had no track record. People in brokerage firms agreed it was a great concept, but we had to convince them we could sell stock."

The Security Bureau gave them one year from May 1977 to sell 100,000 shares. Rosanova said, "Then we had to convince other people we could do what we said we could and be successful."

On the day the year was up, Rosanova Productions Inc. has sold 109,000 shares at a dollar apiece. In January 1980 the company actually became operational.

Long before January of this year, however, work was proceeding behind the scenes. A building was leased, designed and decorated to house a record company's total operations. More importantly, people who could make a record company go were being tapped.



Joseph Rosanova is seeing the realization of a dream with his own record company, in Southfield. (Photo by Jim Wendell)

'The talent pool is unlimited in Detroit. It's like finding a gold mine.'

— Joseph Rosanova Jr., record company president

The company was divided into major departments: recording, marketing, promotion, management and distribution. Each division needed a director. Joe Rosanova of Westland and his associates, Johnny Trudell of Detroit, Adrienne Levine of West Bloomfield, Dr. Carl Pesta of New Baltimore and Richard Bone of Birmingham were able to secure talented and experienced people for each division leader.

JOE ROSANOVA carries the title and responsibility of president. Music industry veterans Gordon Prince, Jay Butler and Elta St. James have set up national distribution and promotion. Johnny Trudell

known locally as one of Detroit's finest trumpet players, is vice president and head of the Recording Division.

"The structure of our company," Rosanova said, "is to encompass every aspect of the entertainment business. Our capital so far, though, has been put in the key areas of recording and production."

Just beginning to resemble Rosanova's original concept by March of this year, the company had produced and released three records with regional and national distribution.

The first album, called "Dream Dance," is a middle-of-the-road (Continued on Page 5D)

Theater polishes old chestnut

By HELEN ZUCKER

review

The Meadow Brook Theatre production of Emily Williams' thriller, "Night Must Fall" is wonderful. An all-embracing cast, directed by Terence Kilburn, gives us beautifully delivered roles, and the result is an evening of sheer fun.

Williams' old chestnut has been treated with care. Good blocking, a brisk pace and a terrific set by Douglas Wright add to the pleasure.

The play runs through April 20 at Meadow Brook Theatre in Wilson Hall on the Oakland University campus near Rochester.

Tom Spackman, an actor with a lot of talent, has finally got a part he can sink his teeth into. As Dan, the page boy who is "observant of the ladies" (to put it mildly), he is deft, funny, eerie, canny and, finally terrifying.

SPACKMAN'S DESCRIPTIONS of the dead Mrs. Chalton, "the lady with the missing head" found in Mrs. Bramson's garden, his cap-twisting, his quick attentions to the eccentric Mrs. Bramson, his move into the house, his final takeover, are right on the mark.

His easy way with women is totally believable. When Spackman reads the Bible rather than "East Lyne" — bend-

ing soliloquiously over Mrs. Bramson — his eyes turn truly mad.

And Spackman's best moment, pulling aside the curtain in the house where Mrs. Bramson has been left alone calling for "Danny" brought a scream from the audience.

Spackman rises to passionate heights at the finale, and his paring kiss on the mouth to Olivia, who is attracted by his violence, lets us know these two lonely souls understand each other too well.

Dan has quick, wonderful lines scattered throughout the play, and Spackman makes use of all of them. Even his high-waisted pants are great.

BARBARA BERGE turns in a hot, stunning performance as Olivia Graye. Mrs. Bramson's impoverished niece. Suffering in the lonely countryside, Olivia writes sonnets no one reads; refuses to marry a nice, dull man; mistrusts Dan on sight, and feels an instant kinship with him. He, too, is a "servant" a person no one really sees.

Ms. Berge conveys a sense of suffo-

cation, of a girl with more education than she knows what to do with, of nerves prickled to the bursting point by her insensitive aunt, her nowhere life.

Dressed like Virginia Woolf, eyes hidden behind thick glasses, Ms. Berge is smoldering repression personified. Hair loosened, glasses gone, raincoat awry at the finale, Ms. Berge emerges as a beautiful girl with no one to spend her beauty on.

Her wits have gone round the bend in the English country side. One hopes her aunt's death will leave her with the money to go to London where she belongs.

Donald W. Dalley does a fine job as the unimaginative, newspaper-reading suitor, Hubert Laurie. Hubert is so sane, so mild, so patient, we know he will make a good husband; he finds Olivia "a keen girl." We also know he's picked the wrong girl. Though he leaves sadly, he's well out of it.

MARY PAT Gleason is the cold, competent Nurse Libby. Durable, solid, she turns up punctually for the "silling" Mrs. Bramson. Like a St. Bernard, she even carries brandy in her bag for "the faints." We know she will never be murdered.

Marianne Muellerleile is terrific as the fresh cook, Mrs. Terence. She has

the energy and bounce of five sailors. When she tells Mrs. Bramson off and gets away with it, we delight in her honesty. It's not cheekiness, it's "let's have less nonsense around here."

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Lori Donley as Dora Parkhous, the pregnant maid, is part simple and docile. Getting pregnant by Dan doesn't seem to phase her much.

Ms. Donley is true to form in plays of this genre. She turns in a good, subtle performance. She brings the cup and manages to never really get in anyone's way.

DOROTHY BLACKBURN as the by-pondiatic in a wheelchair manages to get in everyone's way. "What's his character? This unmitigated boulder!" Mrs. Bramson shouts, hearing that Dora is pregnant.

Meeting Dan, she forgets all about Dora, invites "the boulder" to call her "Mother" as she calls him "Son."

Mrs. Bramson is querulous, self-centered, in short, an obnoxious old lady who eats chocolate and forgets to pay people. When she rises out of her (Continued on page 2D)