

Wife, daughter join Barney on Music Hall stage in 'Da'

By ETHEL SIMMONS

For Barnard Hughes, life is good. Touring in his New York stage hit, "Da," the veteran actor is on the road with his wife and daughter, who are both playing roles in the production. "Da," a multi-award-winning Irish comedy, continues through Sunday at the Music Hall Center in Detroit.

Breakfasting at a round table in the Sheraton-Scottfield Hotel on Friday were the very charming Hughes, his attractive wife Helen Stenborg, and their 21-year-old daughter, Laura Hughes.

"I've always been a very secure actor of the second rank, but it took the TV series 'Doc' and 'Da' to put me up front," Hughes replied, when asked his reaction to being somewhat the toast of the town, at this point in his career.

"I thought that 'Da' was a total success when I first read it," he explained.

"When we did it off-Broadway, and did it very successfully, if that was all the life the play had that was very satisfactory with me.

"THE FACT that it went up Broadway, that's just gravy." Discussing theater critics, he spoke about at-times venomous New York critic, John Simon. "Everyone picks it (the paper) up and wonders, 'God! Am I cut to pieces?'"

But when Simon reviewed Hughes' performances in "Da," "it was extravagant," the actor said. (Simon compared Hughes to Gielgud and Olivier.)

"If you want to know what Hughes is really like, and perhaps recall him best from his TV role as a kindly, gruff big-city general practitioner in "Doc," you're close to his real character.

At least that's what Hughes claims. As Dr. Joe Bogart, "I thought he had an edge to his tongue. He had opinions about people and they weren't always kind. That just about sums me up," he said, amiably.

"DOC" RAN one and one-half years on TV.

"I've got to get out and get some more space on the tube for myself," Hughes acknowledged. He hasn't done any TV or film in three years, except for a movie of the week based on the Father Brown detective character.

"I've got to do the opposite of what Jean Stapleton has done," he continued. Earlier in the conversation he had asked about the Birmingham Theatre, where he knew

Ms. Stapleton has recently appeared.

Hughes and Jean Stapleton did a movie together, "Cold Turkey," which Norman Lear produced and directed just before "All in the Family," Hughes said.

On "All in the Family," Hughes appeared in early episodes as Father Majeke, "one of those characters who doesn't suffer fools or Archie Bunker gladly."

IN "DA," playwright Hugh Leonard describes his own remembrances of his "Da," or Dad. As the Irishman, a gardener, Hughes ages from 50 to 80 during the play.

"The old man was ignorant, dense, bigoted — one of those classic curmudgeon characters," Hughes said.

He uses an authentic Dublin accent in the play. "I do accents very well. My mother and father were born in Ireland, but my accent is nothing like theirs," he said, of his stage role.

"Helen has quite a good Irish accent, and Laura uses a bit of a lilt," he continued.

Actress Helen Stenborg said she portrays "Barney's wife" in the play, and their daughter Laura "plays the young girl of ill repute in town."

Ms. Stenborg toured years ago as understudy in "Claudia." She has blunt-cut grey hair and was dressed smartly in a suit with tie-collar blouse at the breakfast interview.

SHE MET her husband-to-be after he got out of the Army and they were in a hospital show together in New York.

Daughter Laura, whom Hughes affectionately calls Lulu, graduated last spring from the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York. She's a pretty, dark-haired girl with fair skin contrasting against unrugged, red cheeks.

On tour, Laura has her own apartment and is learning to keep her own budget.

"Laura's gotten consistently good reviews and Barney and I are delighted," her mother said.

The theatrical family also includes a son, Doug, who is a young director and writer. He is doing a workshop production off-Broadway. In New York, the Hughes "live in a big old West Side apartment. We had the kitchen torn out and a modern country kitchen put in," Hughes said.

He likes to cook. "I don't do bread or desserts. I like scaloppins and stews and various things with veals and chicken breasts," he said.



Barnard Hughes is "Da," whose son remembers his father in the warm Irish comedy.

He uses an authentic Dublin accent in the play. 'I do accents very well. My mother and father were born in Ireland, but my accent is nothing like theirs.'

— Barnard Hughes, starring in 'Da'

DURING BREAKFAST, all three of them recalled when asked to pass the salt. It's bad luck, he reminded the wayward reporter.

Theater folk are notorious for their superstitions. Hughes admitted that his makeup case contains so many mascots, there's hardly room for anything else.

His favorite good-luck object is a one-legged penguin tin, 50 years old. Daughter Laura has a seashore pin and earrings, originally from a

famous actress, welcoming her to the stage.

Laura has been enjoying traveling and working with her parents. "We haven't fought, or any of that nonsense," she said. "It's actually a help. I'm more open about discussing problems."

The road tour of "Da" opened in Toronto on Sept. 10. The tour included Boston, where they were sold out. "People were hanging from the rafters. We've invited back and will close there in June," Ms. Stenborg said.

At Studio Theatre 'Kiss Me Kate' is simply great

By BARBARA MICHALS

review

Oakland University's Department of Music deserves a plethora of superlatives for its current production of "Kiss Me Kate." The show boasts some exceptionally fine singing voices, impressive choreography, skilful staging and enormous zest.

Performances will continue through Sunday and April 16-20 at the Studio Theatre in Varner Hall on the university campus near Rochester.

The Cole Porter musical comedy features a play-within-a-play format. Members of a touring theatrical company stage Shakespeare's "The Taming of the Shrew" while they contend with various off-stage problems.

In the Shakespearean play, Petruchio struggles to tame the shrewish Katherine and turn her into an obedient wife. Off-stage, Fred Graham (John Thomas), the director and star of the show, struggles to tame his tempestuous co-star Lilli Vanessi (Loni Pryce), who also happens to be his ex-wife. Despite some lingering affection between them, they fight incessantly.

AS GRAHAM/PETRUCHIO, John Thomas' rich baritone is simply a knock-out. His best solo numbers range from the ballad "Were Thine That Special Face" to the more vigorous "I've Come to Wive It Wealthily in Padua" and the lusty "Where Is the Life That Late I Led?"

With his trim dark beard and magnificent voice, Thomas is easily reminiscent of Alfred Drake. His acting is as masterful as his singing, and Thomas' whole performance is polished, flawless, thoroughly professional.

Loni Pryce is an authoritative Lilli Vanessi/Katherine, credible in her mood shifts and stormy rages. Her lovely soprano voice is a bit thin at times, though, even in the intimacy of the Studio Theatre. Ms. Pryce's best number is Katherine's humorous lament "I Hate Men," and she teams with Thomas for pleasing renditions of "Wonderbar" and "So In Love."

AS THE SAUCY Lois Lane/Bianca, Charilny Suriano's impressive voice projects nicely. She charms mightily in her solo numbers "Why Can't You Be True?" and "Always True to You in My Fashion," and she amusingly hams up Lois' Shakespearean debut.

Lois' boyfriend Bill Calhoun (Ric Gib-

bard) is a compulsive gambler who flippantly signs Graham's name to a large IOU. When some local hoods try to collect on the note, the wily Graham turns the whole situation to his advantage.

In the roles of Calhoun/Lucentio, Ric Gibbard is a graceful dancer, particularly in his spirited "Rose Dance" ballad. His singing and acting are also pleasing, though there's not enough of the cad in his Calhoun.

As the two hoods, Todd Heughens and Dan Piets are sheer perfection. Looking and sounding like Damon Runyon characters who have wandered into the wrong play, Heughens and Piets master the mannerisms and accents without overdoing them.

THEIR HILARIOUS duet "Brush up Your Shakespeare" usually steals the show in any production of "Kiss Me Kate," but Oakland's show is just too good from the start to finish for anyone to steal it.

Director Stephanie Rivers ably choreographed the production. All the dances and ensemble numbers are skilful and lively, and dancers Kim Van DeCasteels, Bill Giroux and Daniel Barron are particular stand-outs in "Another Op'nin', Another Show" and "Too Darn Hot."

Portraying Harrison Howell, a wealthy Southerner engaged to Lilli Vanessi, Ron DeRoo seems far too decrepit, making the character ludicrous instead of gently satiric.

Musical director Sally Albrecht leads a 15-piece orchestra that always sounds top-notch. It seems a shame the orchestra remains hidden behind a black partition, even through the curtain calls. The musicians deserve better treatment, and leaving them visible would not hinder credibility in the least.

The show's pacing is perfect throughout, with scene changes accomplished swiftly and smoothly. Costumes are rich and colorful, and the set is simple but adequate.

If a chorus member didn't take an awkward step every now and then, it would be easy to forget that "Kiss Me Kate" is a student production.

Take me out to the ballgame—at Franklin show



Debi Green is Lola, who gets what she wants, baseball star, in musical "Damn Yankees."

The audience will be seated in a baseball park setting, complete with hot dogs and refreshments, when the Franklin Village Players presents the musical "Damn Yankees."

Performances will be at 8 p.m. April 16-19, 25-26 and 3 p.m. April 20 and 27 at Franklin School. Tickets priced for adults and students include a hot dog and a beverage. For reservations call 628-5738.

The original musical is about the Washington Senators baseball team. Franklin's team, however, will be the Detroit Tigers complete with official Tiger uniforms.

"Damn Yankees" features several popular songs, among them "Whatever Lola Wants" and "You've Got to Have Heart."

THIS PRODUCTION marks the third time the Franklin School has been used by the players. Last year the musical "Mame" was presented there as a dessert-theater.

Veteran members and newcomers make up the cast. Old Joe is played by Dave Roberts and young Joe by Mark Maccaogone. Phyllis Young plays Meg Boyd and Bonnie Cook is Gloria Thorpe.

Van Buren is played by Soeren Gozmann and Lola by Debi Green. Walt Urgan is Applegate.

Other members of the cast and chorus include Charlene Lobb, Ginny Perkins, Fred Perkins, Bob Buckley, John Lake, John Green, Rose Galley, Frank Cowick, Dave Wilson, Art Vandell, Sue Larsen and Karen Sherck.

The show is produced by John Lake and directed by Larry Coe. Kathy Fulam is musical director and the production is choreographed by David Wilson.



Charlene Lobb, who plays the sister, studies book of the musical production to be presented by the Franklin Village Players. (Photos by Labe Waddell; more photos on 5D.)

TV program spotlighting Curtis, Yates, students

Curtis Yates, the Detroit Country Day School student who co-starred in "Jimmy B. and Andre," will be featured this weekend on a television show, along with his classmates.

Charles Kuralt's "Sunday Morning Magazine," seen on CBS-TV, will spotlight the young actor and other stu-

dents. The show is seen from 10-11:30 a.m.

Alex Karras and Yates played "Jimmy B. and Andre" in a filmed-for-TV movie, shot on location in Detroit. Yates is now in California, for at least six weeks, working on a pilot film for Warner's.