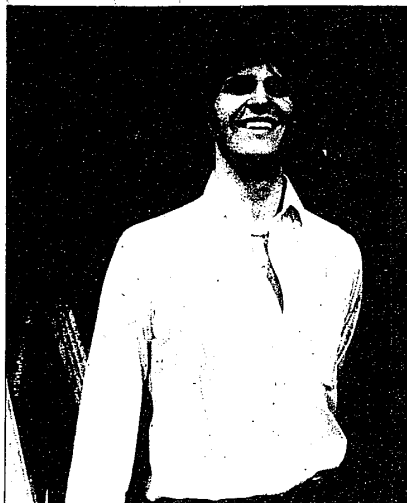




Don Daniels portrays the spurned lover, Charlie, in St. Dunstan's annual outdoor production in the Greek Theatre. St. D's is using a full orchestra for the first time in presenting the musical "Brigadoon."



Sandra Brian is Fiona and Rick Shoemaker is Tommy in "Brigadoon." They are the romantic leads who meet in the mythical Scottish Highland village.

Playdates are 9 p.m. Friday-Sunday and June 6-7 in Bloomfield Hills. Ticket reservations by calling the 24-hour reservation service at 644-0527.

Curtain calls

St. Dunstan's deserves a special rating

Story: DONALD V. CALAMIA
Photos: LAURE WADDELL

Since its inception 48 years ago, St. Dunstan's Guild of Cranbrook has enjoyed the prestige of growing from a small performing arts group into one of the most exceptional amateur theaters in the country.

The group is named after an ninth-century Archbishop of Canterbury known as the Patron Saint of the Theatrical Arts. It is one of the few theaters, professional and amateur alike, to have both an indoor theater and an outdoor Greek Theatre, both used each season.

The Guild moved into its present building prior to World War II after presenting shows for nearly a decade in Kingswood School at Cranbrook.

"Our current facility was originally an open pavilion used by the Greek theater in case of inclement weather," said current President, Tom Ankeny. "The art academy also used it for their exhibits."

Although the playhouse is at Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills, the group has no official association with the Cranbrook Educational Community. "We're part of the Cranbrook family," Ankeny stressed, "but not part of the school. We're our own non-profit corporation."

ST. DUNSTAN'S is not a community theater, but a theater club, according to President-Elect Joyce Fox. "You must be a member of the guild before you can try out for a show," she said.

Membership is limited to 275 persons, many of whom are third generation members.

"If an organization is not solid, the younger generations would not be interested in joining us," President Ankeny declared. "It is unique that the second and third generations are interested in joining the same group in which their parents are members."

The only requirement of membership is age. St. Dunstan's will not admit anyone who is not yet out of high school. "Of course, there is no upper age limit," Mrs. Fox said. "If we need a 90-year-old person for a part, we can get one."

Membership is required before auditioning for a show, but occasionally the group will have to go outside the club in order to complete a cast.

"For instance in our current show, 'Brigadoon,' we required someone who can play a bagpipe," said Bill Everson, publicity chairman. "Since none of our members has that ability, we had to find someone who does."

EACH MEMBER of St. Dunstan's is required to work on at least two productions a season, although, "acting and directing don't count," Ankeny said. "That's a privilege."

Everson added, "Besides, it's no fun to belong to a club such as this if you don't participate."

Most of the group's members live in the Cranbrook area. A few members are from Detroit, Drayton Plains, Lake Orion and other surrounding communities.

"Naturally, those members who do not live as close are not as active as those who live nearby," Ankeny said.

Friends play a key role in membership, Mrs. Fox emphasized. "My husband, David, and I have made some of our closest friends from within St. D's. We've also been responsible for sponsoring several of our other friends into the group, too."

In order to get into St. Dunstan's, a person must first be sponsored by two of the group's members. After filling out a membership form, the potential member is then invited to see the facilities and to meet some of the group's key members. At this time the rules of the organization are presented.

"WE WANT our new members to come into the group with their eyes wide as to their responsibilities and privileges," Everson said. "Once they're approved for membership, the new member is assigned to one of our committees, and it is up to the sponsors to get them immediately involved."

Ankeny said it takes approximately 20 persons backstage for every one person on stage to put on a production. "We have 25 standing committees, which actually run the entire operation. The board of directors gives them direction, but it's a centralized direction and a decentralized execution. Everyone within the group, no matter what position they hold, gets out and works."

Each season, St. Dunstan's presents four full-scale productions, which are open to the public, along with several smaller shows for its own members' amusement.

Ticket Chairwoman Mary Anne Wilson said, "We generally try to do a balanced season with a musical, two light comedies and one semi-heavy show."

(Continued on Page 2D)

Josh White Jr. travels the country performing

By JIM WINDELL

the Raven Gallery, 29101 Greenfield, Southfield.

"It's nice to be associated with one place," White said. "Since 1913, it's been the Raven for me around here. Staying with one club is good because people always know where to find you."

His last album "Sing a Rainbow" was recorded live at the Raven Gallery. Previously, he recorded four albums, in a career that has seen success for him as a singer, guitar player, Broadway actor and TV performer.

Growing up in New York with his legendary father, also a singer and guitar player, Josh White Jr. was performing on the stage by age 4 and was a child actor on Broadway soon thereafter.

His first recording was a 45 for Decca when he was 16 years old. On one side of that record was a song called "See Saw" written by his 12-year-old friend and schoolmate Marvin Hambliss.

"I went to a private school in New York called Professional Children's School," he said. "There were a lot of budding actors and actresses who went there. On the bulletin board in the school there were always calls."

"It was just understood that if there was a part you wanted to audition for, you just signed out and went to it. Then, if you got it and went out on the road, you took a correspondence course to keep up with your studies."

IT HAS BEEN 50 years since Josh White Jr. has done any acting. But between 1949 and 1960 he appeared in five Broadway plays, one off-Broadway play and more than 50 television dramas. The parts for black children and adolescents dropped off around 1960.



Josh White Jr. is appearing at The Raven through June 8. He performs at 8:30 p.m., with an additional show at 10:30 p.m. on weekends, at the Southfield coffeehouse.

"I was always singing," White said,

"so when no acting jobs came along, I just kept singing."

"I wasn't that serious about acting, anyway — at least not enough to give

up singing."

Because he began touring and recording with his father, as a small child, traveling has been a way of life for him. His wife finds his leaving

'As I get older, I take more of me on stage. It's harder to separate me from my performance.'

— Entertainer Josh White Jr.

home so often difficult to cope with sometimes.

"My casual attitude about leaving my family doesn't help Sarah," White said as he began to wake up, thanks to coffee served by Sarah.

"My two boys have grown up on the road, but I think it has helped them in some ways. They've learned you can go anywhere and make friends and not have to have close proximity to maintain friendships."

"They have solid friends that they see maybe only once or twice a year."

His oldest son, now 16, is the first family member in three generations to have a normal adolescence, White said. Neither of his two sons seems interested in singing or following in his or their grandfather's footsteps.

"Unlike me and my father," White said happily, "they can sit back and enjoy growing up."

AS A YOUNGSTER doing a concert on stage with his father, White would sing three or four songs of his own but would let his father do the entertaining.

"When I began to perform as a single, I would return to those songs I used to do with my father."

"Once I saw a black performer in Boston and I watched him simply talk to his audience about anything that happened in his life."

His delivery was good, and people related to that. I decided then that that was entertaining and have used that

approach when I perform."

With the low-key mood prevailing in the interview, White talked about approaching 40 years of age and how his music reflects his own philosophies of life.

"Over the years, I looked around and realized how important music is in people's lives. Mary Travers has said that music is the echo in a person's life. I believe that."

"I never did a lot of blues, not like my father did. I guess the blues never sounded believable the way I did them."

"I have to believe what I sing and not sing a song just because it is popular."

"As I get older, I take more of me on stage. It's harder to separate me from my performance."

"I can't stand to sing songs that aren't positive. I have a certain feeling that I'm throwing out that I want people to pick up."

"THERE ARE too many songs about cheating or that say, 'I don't know what I'm going to do with my life if you leave me.' That's crazy. People need to hear in song that their life will be perpetuated."

Not surprisingly Josh White Jr. communicates his thoughtful feelings about life whenever he performs. It's at the Raven Gallery where he seems to be most at home and comfortable, and the audience leaves the Southfield nightclub singing a rainbow song, just the way they have learned from Josh White Jr.

WITH SIX CHILDREN in the family, there are a lot of housekeeping chores. When White and Sarah were married 1½ years ago, she brought four children into the family and Josh brought his two sons.

White has two weeks to enjoy his family as he is staying in town long enough to do a two-week engagement, through June 8, at his favorite hangout in the Detroit area. Despite a schedule that has him touring through much of the year, he always schedules three or four appearances each year at