

Six Rms Riv Vu

Dinner theater is top-heavy with talent in Farmington

By LORRAINE McCЛИSH

Five area residents, four of them members of Farmington Players, are in rehearsals now for "Six Rms Riv Vu," set to open Friday, June 27, in Detroit's Paradise Cafe Dinner Theater, Woodward north of Six Mile.

Having that many actors from one suburban area cast in the same play is "something of a phenomenon," said Nancy Gurwin, who is in the throes of opening her 10th dinner theater production.

It is particularly so in that since there are only eight members in the cast and the company can expect anywhere from 50-100 actors to show up for an audition, no matter what size the cast.

Watching Barbara Lynn Bean and John Powers, the two leads in rehearsals this week, Ms. Gurwin said "they are two strong actors. Well, they have to be. They're stage continuallly from the beginning to the end of the show."

The two are backed by the performances of Sandy Dittrich, Ed Keller and Erik Carlson, all of whom have been seen on stage in Farmington Players Barn.

POWERS HAS been in and out of major production rehearsals steadily since launching his theatrical career in 1971 from Marygrove University of Detroit.

He has appeared at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., the Mayway Theater in Chatham, Mass., the Oldenberg Playhouse in South Bend, Ind., and Somerset Dinner Theater in Troy.

His most recent role for the players here was in "Prisoner of Second Avenue."

When he winds up his role as Paul Friedman in "Six Rms Riv Vu," after its eight-week summer run at the Paradise, he'll be directing "The Human Scrambles," the story of a dinner theater was that of Tiffany Richards in "Mary, Mary."

Work with his father in Powers Playhouse in Farmington is juggling between singing, dancing, acting, or technical

theater assignments, "anything to keep me involved in theater," he said.

MS. BEAN IS a native of Farmington who grew up in theater, dancing at age 3 and acting at 6.

She cites her biggest theatrical accomplishment as a lead cast as the only lead in Michigan Opera Theater's production of "Showboat" who was not from New York or California. I auditioned against all of them and got the lead role. Really a feather in my cap."

All told, she estimates she has been the lead in about 50 shows stemming from her singing, dancing and acting talents.

Farmington Parks and Recreation Department is one of her main employers for teaching dance to youngsters in Shinnesee Recreation Center, Forest and Eagle Elementary schools.

She produces one show a month for Southland Repertory Theater and supervises street shows during the summer in Greenfield Village.

She holds a master's degree from Wayne State University in interpretative reading and theater and takes on the role of Anne Miller in "Six Rms Riv Vu," the story of two people who get themselves locked into an empty apartment each is trying to rent.

SANDY DITTRICH has an unusually expressive face which suits her well for the variety of roles she has taken on for Farmington Players, most recently the part of Mrs. Manningham in "Angel Street."

The editorial supervisor for Sports Illustrated plays the part of Janet Friedman, a pregnant wife, in "Six Rms Riv Vu."

Ms. Dittrich majored in drama and theater arts at Michigan State University and is a free-lance narrator-model who does voice-overs for Detroit radio commercials. Her most recent role in dinner theater was that of Tiffany Richards in "Mary, Mary."

ED KELLER, a computer operator by profession, said he joined the Farm-

ington Players "because I was ripe for some diversion."

With two small character roles behind him ("I think I was on stage longer for the curtain call than I was in my role," he said) he jumps to professional dinner theater playing the part of the supervisor.

He has had no training," he said. "This is a hobby for me."

Erik Carlson has had both experience and intensive training in set construction, lights, stage managing and as a sound technician stemming from a Western Michigan University degree in communications arts and sciences.

On-stage work for him is relatively new.

"Before I got the part in 'Caught in the Villain's Web' (for Farmington Players) I was happy to be backstage," he said, "but all that cheering and yelling from the audience has become obnoxious."

More cheering and yelling for Carlson, who worked with another member of the players in "Arsenic and Old Lace."

Carlson, an audio-visual technician for Oakland Community College's Highland Lakes Campus, takes his first professional acting role as Larry in

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Sandy Dittrich rehearses her role with Chuck Rollison, one of the few members of the cast not from the Farmington area. Ms. Dittrich has been seen several times this past season, in very demanding roles in Farmington Players Barn.



Barbara Bean, who has taught many area youngsters how to dance through Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Department, takes the lead role in "Six Rms Riv Vu" with John Powers, familiar to Farmington area play-goers through his affiliation with Farmington Players.



Ed Keller, on stage only twice in Farmington Players' productions, jumps to professional theater in another character part for "Six Rms Riv Vu."



The quartet who are pleased with the way rehearsals are coming along are all members of Nancy Gurwin Productions. At left, director Ed Guest, Nancy Gurwin, Delores Shevlin and Donna Zatkin. Mrs. Shevlin is the company's publicist and Ms. Zatkin is producer of "Six Rms Riv Vu."

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