

Director Kevin Carlisle: Manilow's 'third eye'

By ETHEL SIMMONS

As director of Barry Manilow's World Concert Tour, Kevin Carlisle has been touring with the show "to see that it's running smoothly."

Born and raised in Birmingham, Carlisle recently was back in town when Manilow treated his fans to five nights of entertainment at Pine Knob Music Theatre in Clarkston.

Pine Knob was only the fourth place the show had played so far, according

to Carlisle, and each location had a different kind of theater set-up. "It's a new version of the concert tour in the fall," he said.

Carlisle describes his job with Manilow as "to be his third eye."

This is Carlisle's third year as director of the tour. He also has done four television specials with pop superstar Manilow and received an Emmy for the third special.

"IT WAS MY first Emmy," Carlisle

said. "I was thrilled." Happiness was tempered with sorrow. "My mother died the day before. It was a weekend of roller coaster emotions."

Arriving to spend an afternoon in Birmingham, Carlisle visited the offices of the Observer & Eccentric for the interview. He was dressed casually, wearing a jacket with "Kevin" stitched on the front and "Barry Manilow World Tour" on the back (the tour will go to London).

Carlisle's appearance offers an at-

tractive contrast of gray hair, dark eyebrows, blue eyes and reddish-tanned face. The dancer turned choreographer turned director has a dancer's slight, muscled build.

The last time Carlisle was in town was with the Harry Blackstone magic show, for which he was director and choreographer. The production played the Music Hall Center in Detroit.

"The show is now running on Broadway and doing very well. It got incred-

ble reviews on Broadway," Carlisle said.

A graduate of Birmingham Seaholm High School, Carlisle now lives in Hollywood. "My dad lives in Los Angeles, as well, and works with me in my production company for theatrical and TV productions."

A BROTHER, Davis, is general manager of a Porsche-Audi dealership in Birmingham.

Kevin Carlisle was a performer on Broadway and was in a trio on television. Lorene Yarnell was one of two girls who danced with him in the trio.

When Shields and Yarnell teamed up for their comedy, Carlisle did their choreography the first two years. On Broadway, he also was a choreographer.

Last summer, when Carlisle visited the Detroit area, he called Seaholm High to track down school friends but was unsuccessful. He wants classmates to contact him at his present home address: 2022 N. Sycamore, Hollywood 90068.

Carlisle's career took off in a new direction when he became a director as well as choreographer.

"I really love what I do," he said. "My biggest challenge is to work with big stars who have difficulty working with people."

He explained that Lucille Ball, Bob Hope and Barry Manilow, too, are perfectionists. But all is well "if you give them 100 percent."

CARLISLE SAID Manilow's new

touring show is more low-keyed than the last show. "It's not as produced. It's a transition for him into a more adult kind of show. He's developing in his music, although he still appeals to young people."

In addition to working with Manilow, Carlisle has been busy putting together the syndicated television show "Solid Gold" with Donna Warwick as host.

"We did the pilot 'Solid Gold 79' last winter, and it got the highest rating of any variety show for the season," he said.

Carlisle is working as director on the show, with other performers as choreographer. "Solid Gold" presents gold-record hits, with a guest-host joining Donna. Eight dancers — six girls and two guys — are part of the cast.

Doing choreography for the stars, Carlisle tries to make the person look like they've created their own movements. "I feel most successful when people look at it and say, 'They look so natural, what did you do?'"

"I look at what people do naturally well and expand on that."

He said Donna Warwick is delightful. Carlisle worked with her for many years, when he choreographed the "Gary Moore Show" where she performed.

BARRY MANILOW produced Ms. Warwick's last album, which was a big hit.

Away from show business, Carlisle has a 1,000-acre ranch in northern California.

'The Amen Corner' plays Music Hall

James Baldwin's Broadway play with music "The Amen Corner," opens Thursday for a limited engagement at Detroit's Music Hall Center.

"The Amen Corner," brought to Detroit by Chicago's Karamba Repertory Company, stars Val Gray Ward, Ms. Ward, also the co-produce, has engaged six Detroit artists including Rod Lumpkin and Sukunah Delaney, to supplement the cast of 17 Karamba actors and singers.

Ms. Ward plays the strong central character of Sister Margaret, an inner-city pastor beset by conflicts all around her. These include her detractors within the church, a son whose worldliness

theater

leads him from the church and an errant husband returning home to die.

"The Amen Corner" exemplifies the black church, in all of its emotionalism, handclapping, shouting, tambourine playing and spirited communion.

BALDWIN WROTE this play out of his own background as the son of a Harlem preacher. Baldwin has said, "Val Ward is Sister Margaret. This production is the finest 'Amen Corner' of all time."



Light Years Ahead

Light Years Ahead returns to Dewey's in the Michigan Inn for a two-week engagement beginning Monday. The group will appear through Aug. 2 at the inn in Southfield. Light Years Ahead plays a mixture of pop and rock songs for the dancing crowd. The group will perform 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. Monday-Saturday. There is no cover charge. The inn is at 16400 J.L. Hudson Drive next to the Northland Theatre.

Attendance reaches high

Meadow Brook, the area's Actors' Equity professional theater on the campus of Oakland University near Rochester, hit an audience high of 96.2 percent of paid capacity during the season, leaving 5,000 seats for public sale.

This figure compares favorably with

the local theater's 1978-79 season which played to 94.1 percent of paid capacity.

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