

# Pageantry marks fine production

"Gideon," produced and directed by Marty Stretcher of Center Stage, is a vivid moral pageant.

Colorful in costume and stage effects, light in humor and rich in Biblical language, the play is an arresting excursion into the resilient temperament of Judaism.

"Gideon" will continue at 8 p.m. Thursday and Saturday at the Aaron DeRoy Studio Theater of the Jewish Community Center of Metropolitan Detroit, 6600 W. Maple, West Bloomfield.

Stretcher has styled his production of "Gideon" after 18th century French theater. In keeping with this tradition, God (David Fox) signals the start of the play by rapping the floor three times with his staff. (As Stretcher put it after opening night, "You can't really have God walking about on stage without making something of a spectacle of it.")

ARTIFICE is effective in this little theater which lends itself perfectly to an intimacy between players and audi-

## review

ence. The set, designed and lit by Bill Moore, is composed of several irregularly shaped platforms carpeted in earth tones. Positioned imaginatively, they suggest the hills and plains of Biblical times.

Overhead, strips of theatrical gauze in chalky mauves, blues and grays are draped to create the illusion of a tent. Throughout, the actors are visible during scene changes, shifting the set, an intentional piece of choreography. "Gideon" in large part is a dialogue between Gideon and the Angel of God. Less a drama of character and more one of ideas, "Gideon" describes through the metaphor of courtship and marriage the successive spiritual stages of divine love, and ultimately divine disaffection.

It is in the pathetic gulf between the eternal and the temporal that we are left, not, however, without the warmth of humor to relieve the darkness.

As God, David Fox gives a commanding performance. His beautifully modulated voice plays with the dialogue, bringing out all the wit, the passion and the capricious moods of a wrathful, Old Testament God. His is a strong presence throughout the play, a vision of Gideon's and the audiences alike, a blend of myth and man.

IN CONSTANT repartee with God, Shelly Smith as Gideon passes convincingly from disbelief to faith, from abject humility to pomposity, from divine love to self-love, and from an ethereal passion to an earthly one.

It is a complex role, for as Gideon, he is both "the man of valor" and the "donkey son," both the "ordinary man" and the Hebrew chosen by God to work His miracle of victory over the invading Midianites.

Shelly Smith brings to the part a

ready acumen and attractive naivete. Boyish and petulant throughout, he grows progressively pathetic as the epitome of elemental man, whose destiny it is to be "a suspension of matter floating about in the void."

Herb Shapiro plays the part of Captain Shalim with a relaxed relish. Also in the ranks of Gideon's "army of cowards," Doug Dettar gives an energetic performance as the ecstatic visionary Jael. With intensity he parodies the mystical experience.

The Women of Manasseh and Sue-the (Judy Richards, Janice Styles and Liz Porter) appear in decorative groupings, their movements expressive and their costumes flowing. As Orpah, Rachel Jacobs dances seductively into Gideon's life, playing the Eve to his Innocence.

The rest of the cast, a guard (Steve Fligman), several captains of the army, the elders, the Midianite Kings, Gideon's father (Ed Cable) and his son (Robbie Chaffin) appear beautifully robed in thoughtfully choreographed sequences.

# Comedy romance opens 15th season



Harry Ellerbe and Polly Rowles appear in Meadow Brook Theatre's production of "Thieves' Carnival," opening Thursday.

Meadow Brook Theatre will open its 15th season with "Thieves' Carnival" on Thursday on the campus of Oakland University near Rochester.

Authored by French playwright Jean Anouilh and translated by Lucienne Hill, "Thieves' Carnival" is a comedy romance set in a French resort in 1912.

The cast features Meadow Brook favorites and several Meadow Brook newcomers. Returning are Polly Rowles who has performed in Meadow Brook's productions of "The Show-Off" and "Ring Around the Moon." Harry Ellerbe who has appeared in 13 Meadow Brook plays, most recently played Grandpa Vanderhof in last spring's Meadow Brook closer "You Can't Take It With You."

Last winter in one of Meadow Brook's all-time hits, Terence Marinar was Charley in "Charley's Aunt." Another favorite is Donald Ewer who appeared as Sir Peter Teazle in last season's opening play "The School for Scandal."

include Melaine Resnick, A.D. Cover, Barbara Berge, Donald W. Dailey, Robert Jones and Mark Halpin. Lou Brockway, Terry Carpenter, Gary Ed Mach, Bob Murky, Allan Stevens, Stefani Van Meter and Patricia Wertheim are making their Meadow Brook debuts.

Under the direction of Terence Kilburn, Meadow Brook's artistic director, "Thieves' Carnival" will feature sets by Peter-William Hicks, lighting by Barry Griffith and costumes by Mary Lynn Bonnell. Rachael Lindhart is the production's stage manager.

Opening week performances of "Thieves' Carnival" are scheduled at 8:30 p.m. Thursday-Friday, 2 and 8:30 p.m. Saturday and 6:30 p.m. Sunday.

The following three weeks offer performances at 8:30 p.m. Tuesdays-Fridays, 6 and 9:30 p.m. Saturdays, 6:30 p.m. Sundays and 2 p.m. Wednesdays. The theater is dark on Mondays.

Tickets for "Thieves' Carnival," which will run Oct. 9 through Nov. 2, may be purchased by calling the Meadow Brook Theatre box office at 377-3300.

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DAILY  
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