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Acting with Malden thrills local actors

By ETHEL SIMMONS

Getting a chance to play roles in the Karl Malden television film "Word of Honor," shot in the Detroit area recently, was a challenge and a thrill for three performers represented by Talent Management Services of Southfield.

In the second-floor offices of agent Lynn Carroll, leading-man handsome Dan Crane, playish Chris Black ZeVan and strong, sophisticated Joyce Feuring recalled their work on the Georgian Bay Productions film.

Brown-haired, blue-eyed Crane said he was "cast against type" to play the villain, Roger Clements, a town leader and bank president who leads a secret life. As the plot unfolds, Clements is accused of rape and lewd conduct, after taking young girls to his cottage.

Karl Malden plays the newspaper reporter who gets a tip on Clements' activities, won't reveal his source to the police when the case comes to trial, and finds his own life and family's destroyed in the process.

The reporter is held in contempt of court and jailed during the proceedings.

CRANE, WHO HAS worked in Detroit, Chicago and Cleveland, moved to New York in August. He was living in Southfield when he came to Detroit to get a Ph.D. in theater at Wayne State University in 1973.

The personable actor said he usually plays a Midwestern All-American type, although he has played the lead role in "Dracula" three times.

In "Word of Honor," Crane appears as the bank president, the local Bert Parks, emceeing a beauty pageant, in a scene filmed in Plymouth.

Because Crane had to return to New York shortly after his filming was completed, he didn't get to see any of the rushes but, "the director (Mel Danahy) said the sequences from the beauty pageant looked absolutely phenomenal."

Crane said it's been 25 years since he first stepped on a stage. Meeting Malden, he was thrilled "to get to work with someone who is that good." The two men had a lengthy scene together, where the reporter applies for a loan from the bank president.

"YOU CAN REALLY feel the energy coming at you," Crane declared, remembering the scene. Crane also appears in several courtroom scenes.

Two lawyers in the courtroom scenes are portrayed by an actress from New York and the real-life lawyer of Alex Karras, the ex-Detroit Lions football

player who produced the CBS-TV film "Word of Honor." Crane said Karras' lawyer marveled, "This is really hard work," when he participated in the filming.

A bank in Plymouth was used for the bank setting; courtroom scenes were shot in Royal Oak. The moviemakers originally hoped Birmingham would be the locale for "Word of Honor," but the Birmingham City Commission refused permission to film on city property.

Actress Joyce Feuring, who played the mother of a young man who marries the reporter's daughter in the film, said that the wedding and rehearsal was shot at St. Hugo of the Hills in Bloomfield Hills.

CHRIS ZE VAN, who has Broadway musical credits in her past, is now a dinner theater choreographer and also teaches and acts. There wasn't a part for her in "Word of Honor," so she was glad to work as an extra.

Ms. ZeVan, an Oak Park resident, appeared in the crowd in a scene shot at Cranbrook Greek Theatre in Bloomfield Hills. In the movie sequence she was one of the audience members watching the reporter's daughter audition as a cellist for a scholarship.

"I didn't want to be the world's oldest chorus girl," Ms. ZeVan explained, about reentering her career from Broadway dancer-singer to actress.

She said of Malden, "Those of us who have been around a few years have watched this man's craft. Working as an extra, it's part of our craft. I spent the day observing — and they feed you lunch!"

She described Malden as "a consummate professional."

Low-voiced, mature Ms. Feuring spoke of her impressions of Malden. "He seemed very even tempered. He was very humble." She told Malden she had "seen him on the tube in 'Streets of New York' at 3 a.m. the night before. He seemed genuinely glad."

MS. FEURING also mentioned that Malden passed along an acting tip he had learned from James Cagney, that when you look in the camera don't blink, then use the blink as part of a movement when you turn.

Ms. ZeVan said, "The actors were talking about emotion. Malden said, 'You don't act the emotion, you act the intent.'" She was fascinated by "the practicality of his craft."

The opportunity for performers to act in movies being made in Detroit and Michigan is ever-expanding.

"Georgian Bay Productions has found out now there is a fantastic acting community in Detroit," Ms. Feuring said.

ring said. She added, "Many of us don't want to go through the horrors of New York."

Crane described how New York can squeeze the juices out of you. "Detroit, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh — the so-called smaller markets is a great place to learn. A lot of people

make that tragic mistake of going through that older mill too soon."

Ms. Feuring's many acting credits include Meadow Brook Theatre productions and Detroit's Attie Theatre. Four years ago she started training classes for professional actors at the Screen Actors of Detroit Conservatory.



Dan Crane plays the villain in "Word of Honor."



Joyce Feuring is cast as a mother of the bride.

French dialogue coached

When the musical "My Strings" opens on the Royal Oak Campus of Oakland Community College on Nov. 7, it will be as authentic as the cast and crew can make it.

The company has turned to the talents of a French conductor and dialogue coach during rehearsals. For Jean-George Fleury of Birmingham, the experience has been filled with reminiscences.

"I came to American when I was 12 with my sister," he said. "Neither of us spoke English, so they put us in the kindergarten." Fleury has bitter-sweet memories of his childhood in France during World War II.

"We grew up in a town outside Paris, very small," he explained. "My father was an accordion player and liked to insult the German troops by playing the French National Anthem."

THE FAMILY was split up, with Fleury's sister going to Anjou and his mother emigrating to the United States with a brother. After the war, he and his sister, Elizabeth, came to the United States.

"I wasn't sure I'd ever see Paris again, so I took a tour of the Eiffel Tower the day we left," he remembers. "I was right. I haven't been back since."

The cast for the Richard Rodgers musical has had some interesting problems with the show. For one thing, several of them who don't speak the language have songs in French.

Fleury has been teaching them the words by rote since August. To give the native Americans the image of Frenchmen, Fleury and the director have showed them travel movies, slides, and assigned books for them to read about Paris. "We even cooked them a couple of French dinners after rehearsal," he joked.

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Chris Black ZeVan worked as an extra in the CBS-TV movie.

Film views human body

The National Geographic Society film "Man: The Incredible Machine" will be shown at 2:45 and 3:45 p.m. Nov. 8 at the Cranbrook Institute of Science in Bloomfield Hills.

The half-hour film takes viewers on a photographic journey through the human body to see the interior of the heart, the 60,000-mile network of blood vessels and 206 bones — more than half of which are located in the hands and feet.

"Man: The Incredible Machine" is

part of a Saturday film program at the institute, which offers natural history and science films at no cost beyond museum admission of \$2.50 for adults, \$1.50 for students and senior citizens.

Also included in Saturday museum admission are planetarium demonstrations at 2, 3, 4 and 7:30 p.m. and observatory demonstrations between 8:30-10 p.m.

Saturday hours are 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. For more information, call 644-3210.