

Thursday, January 22, 1981

One-woman show

Artist and promoter of the arts branches out as art lecturer

By LORRAINE MCCLISH

Oakland Community College's Auburn Campus.

"Different themes just seemed to keep popping up," she said of the dozen lectures she has developed, "much the same as the themes are used in the Picture Lady program."

The Picture Lady program breaks down prints of quality art into portfolios of flowers, or clowns, or seascapes, for example. Then volunteers from the art foundation take the portfolios into the classroom and give a session on how different artists view these subjects.

"I've done pretty much the same thing for my lectures, to suit special interest groups," she said. "I've just completed one now for church groups I have correlated with scripture."

Another lecture will show how women have been seen by artists over the years; another how children have been interpreted by artists through the centuries.

Her lectures are shaped now to where they can be geared to church groups, women's groups, garden clubs, as well as art groups.

THE THEMES that have just kept popping up are doing so at such a rate

she is taking time off from teaching during the spring session to add to her lecture repertoire.

She takes all of her slides herself, and all of the material in her lectures come from her own feelings on art.

Her philosophy is that art is to be enjoyed and appreciated by everyone, the creator as well as the viewer.

She has taught classes ranging from nursery school through high school students, from the handicapped at FAR Conservatory to the seniors in The Gathering Place.

Awards for her work have been many. She singles out a purchase prize from Detroit Institute of Arts through Michigan Watercolor Society and an honorable mention in a national Small Painting Exhibit as ones she is most proud to have received.

Her medium is predominately watercolor. The works on display in the library as if they were old friends, one, and that is a mixed media with some watercolor in it.

Her goal, in common with many watercolorists, is to become a member of The American Watercolor Society.

"You have to have a work accepted three times in a 10-year period to be a member, then be sponsored by a mem-

ber," she says of the prestigious society.

"It requires a lot of discipline to pursue artistic endeavors along with raising an active family," Mrs. Nichols said. "It also requires a delicate balance, managing the heavy schedule."

MRS. NICHOLS

is the mother of two teenage sons. The oldest, a senior at Farmington High School, is interested in art, and Mrs. Nichols believes will probably pursue commercial art at Oakland Community College this fall.

Her youngest, an eighth-grader at Power Middle School, was one of the first hard-of-hearing youngsters to be mainstreamed into a public elementary school.

The Nichols family spent the last few summers building a cabin, that includes an art studio, in the mountains of Tennessee.

"I hope to spend a great deal of time there in the future," Mrs. Nichols said. "With no telephone to ring I can do more painting."

She will take calls about her lectures from her home, 474-5137.

Her work remains on display in the library, on Liberty and State streets, through Jan. 31.



Award-winning artist Alice Nichols puts a lifetime of studying art into her art lectures to bring art appreciation and art enrichment to the layman as well as the artist. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

'The Runner Stumbles'

Players get first-hand insight for next show

Inside a dimly lit theater, empty except for the actors, a director and the author of the show being produced, a playwright explains why he wrote as he did and why his characters do what they do.

The setting is the Farmington Players' barn theater, where author Milan Stitt is speaking to the cast of "The Runner Stumbles," his play that will be staged by the company beginning Jan. 30.

"This is one of the most incredible things that ever happened to the players — or to any group of amateur actors," said director John Powers of Royal Oak. "We're very, very lucky."

"The Runner Stumbles" is the story of a priest, Father Rivard, accused of

murdering a nun in 1911 in a small town near Traverse City. The play is comprised of scenes from his trial, interspersed with flashbacks to the months before the murder, showing the love that grew between him and the nun, Sister Rita.

Other characters in the play are the priest's housekeeper, the county attorney who defends him, a monsignor from the archdiocese and residents of Solon, Mich., the setting for the play.

"THIS PLAY is not about Catholicism," Stitt said. "It's about people, about loneliness, about love and a little about the nature of God."

He sat on the edge of the barn theater's stage, with the cast grouped

around him in a semi-circle. While they listened intently, he chain smoked and talked casually about the characters in the play as if they were old friends.

He glowed when he described the housekeeper's relationship with the priest and nun.

"Father Rivard and Sister Rita are her best buddies," Stitt said. He described the childhood he imagined for the housekeeper, Mrs. Shandig, sold to her husband as a child, abused and lonely until she went to work for Rivard.

Sister Rita's childhood was another cruel experience, according to Stitt. He expanded on the scattered details in the play, describing to the cast Rita's unhappy foster home and the silent treatment she received that makes communication so important to her as an adult.

It is her need for conversation that creates the love between herself and Rivard. It is that same need to communicate that ultimately destroys them.

"Father Rivard is Sister Rita," Stitt said. "They did the same things, made the same mistakes. Now she is fulfilling his dreams."

RIVARD SPENT a lifetime suppressing his emotions in the order of the church, according to Stitt. It provides simple answers and clean starts, but Sister Rita's view of love and life is even simpler, creating more conflict for Rivard than he can bear.

Stitt talked for nearly an hour,



MILAN STITT

trays one of the townspeople. "They have to make up lives and histories that help explain the things that happen onstage. But instead of guessing we have the playwright's advice and it was incredible."

"This is my first major part and it's a hard role to play. Hearing what Milan had to say really helped me get a grip on my character," said Yvonne Golomb, who plays Sister Rita.

"I've never had this much insight into a character," said Dale Feldpausch, in the role of Father Rivard. "As an actor and a director I know that the things we've learned here tonight will bring a realism to this show that other groups might never find."

"It was just wonderful," said Powers. "Milan's been a real help to me in designing the set and interpreting this play. His description of the characters

was so clear that it makes my job a heck of a lot easier."

POWERS MET Stitt as a University of Detroit student when the theater company there was producing "The Runner Stumbles." Stitt was a Michigan resident when he wrote the play and has tried to become involved in all the Detroit-area productions of the show.

He currently divides his time between Ann Arbor, where he is teaching at the University of Michigan, and New York, where he writes for the stage and television.

A PBS special, "Ephraim McDowell's Kentucky Ride," written by Stitt, is scheduled to air this month. He will begin shooting another TV special this month.

'Concert Impromptu' begins music series

"Concert Impromptu at Longacres" is the name of the new monthly chamber music series sponsored by Farmington Community Center.

The first concert is scheduled for 3 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 1 in the living room of the 100-year old home at 24705 Farmington Road.

Last month, the Farmington Hills Historical Commission presented the center with an historical marker identifying the Longacre House as an his-

toric Farmington landmark.

Musical selections will include the Mendelssohn Trio in D Minor with violinist Charlotte Merkerson, cellist Richard Piippo and pianist Fontaine Laing.

A reception will follow each performance to greet the musicians. Donation is \$4 for adults or \$3 for students and senior citizens. Tickets may be purchased in the center in advance, or at the door.



Old furs get new life

Valentina Novacek promises to give an old fur a new life with a few tricks that will transform it into a hat, vest, pillow, jacket, or lining for a cloth coat. The furrier comes to Farmington Community Center for two sessions, one beginning at 1 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 29, and one beginning at 1 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 26. Students may sign up for one or both. At in-person registration, students will be told what to bring to the first class. The center is on Farmington Road, north of 10 Mile road. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

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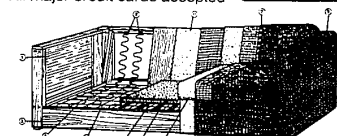


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