

Students bring 'Wonderland' to life

By Dan Klepp
staff writer

Nobody minds that if on her way through Wonderland Alice forgets a few lines or the White Rabbit is late for a very important date, because it is all a part of the learning process.

The production of "Alice in Wonderland" is the finale of a six-week summer session at the Cranbrook Theatre School for students in grades 5-9. Amanda Wonnberger, director of the school, said the goal of the program is to teach children self-confidence, poise and creativity, not necessarily to put on a show of professional caliber.

Three separate casts have been formed from the 102 children enrolled this year, which includes every performer to have a speaking role. The performances will begin at 8 p.m. July 27-29 in the Greek Theatre at the Cranbrook School.

During the summer, the students are divided into groups, which put on a new play every week. On Monday-Thursday they rehearse their lines and attend dance and speech classes. On Fridays each of the groups perform for the other students.

"We make sure each child has a speaking part in the play," Wonnberger said. "We are firm believers that everybody can learn how to perform in the theater."

She said the instructors stress to the students that every part in a play is essential to the final performance, and they should try their hardest to make their part the best it can be no matter how large or small it is.

Although many of the school's past students have pursued careers in the theatre, Wonnberger said the program's purpose is not to push all of the students towards acting.

"Of course, we have always been pleased when people do decide to go on with it," she said. "But everyone can make use of the ability to stand up and speak in front of a large crowd, professionally or socially."

Wonnberger and her late husband, Carl, founded the Theatre School in 1942 when they saw a need for a place where children could get serious theater training. She said at that time there were a few places that trained boys and girls to sing and dance, mostly for vaudeville shows, something she compares to television commercials today.

"In the '30s my husband and I traveled and studied in the East and had a lot of opportunities to see the schools there," she said. "Our travel was curtailed when they were rationing gas during World War II, and there was this beautiful theater nobody was using, so we decided to open a school."

Now in its 41st season, school has the same objectives today as when it was founded.

"We wanted to be able to give children experience in theater fundamentals that would help them in whatever they decide to do," Wonnberger said.

One important point which Wonnberger is very concerned about is that the parents and students know that the training is a "school" and not a "camp."

She said the distinction is very important, because it is vital that all the students be present for rehearsals. If only one person is missing, Wonnberger said, it throws the entire cast off.

In addition to the fifth- through ninth-graders who are performing in "Alice in Wonderland," the school also offers a summer session for 7½- to 9½-year-olds and high-school and college students.

The high-school and college students enrolled in the eight-week program will be performing three plays during August.

On Aug. 3 and 4 they will stage "Nine Girls," a mystery by Wilfred Pitt. On Aug. 6 and 7 the students will put on "Take Her She's Mine," a comedy by Phoebe and Henry Ephron. Then on Aug. 10 and 11 the drama "Portrait of Jenny" by Robert Nathan will be performed.

All of the summer performances are open to the public. For ticket reservations or more information, call 644-9668 or 645-1576.



Photo by Stephen Cantrell

Tracie McKee, Jennie Lynn Bunt-Harlan, Allison Moss, and James Michael Bunt-Harlan will spend this week preparing for their roles in the Cranbrook Theatre

School's production of "Alice in Wonderland." The performance is open to the public. For ticket information, call 644-9668 or 645-1576.

Garp's movie translation glosses over fine points of Irving's original novel

Regular Observer & Eccentric movie critic Louise Snider is on vacation this week. Today's review is written by Helen Zucker.

By Helen Zucker
staff writer

"The World According to Garp," directed by George Roy Hill and scripted by talented Steve Tesich ("Breaking Away"), is a valiant attempt to cram a large, ambitious saga into standard movie time. John Irving's rich, wildly original novel about contemporary craziness deserved at least as much screen time as "Reds."

The movie has its fine moments. But the magic looniness, the high moments of the book — Jenny's arrest, Helen Holm's mistaking Jenny for her long-lost mother, the books within the books, the sharply drawn minor characters that made the book add up, are missing. Passages that Irving took time to develop end abruptly in the film. Scenes collide into the next, and moviemakers who haven't read the book are asked to make enormous time jumps to fill the missing gaps and accept characters who pop in and out at face value. The movie is almost, not quite, a wrap-up of the book.

But it's worth seeing for Glenn Close's remarkable performance as Jenny Fields. Jenny, the nurse who thinks lust is the root of all evil, towered over the novel. Close, despite the loss of some of Jenny's best scenes, towers over the movie. She's extraordinary. Kindness, discipline, love and looniness emanate in a steady stream. If anything helps knit this film together, it's Close; it's always a pleasure to watch high-caliber acting.

John Lithgow in the tough role of Roberta Muldoon, also deserves kudos. Lithgow, who's build like a football player, doesn't come off as a drag queen. He turns in a fine, sensitive performance and helps give the movie what substance it has.

Robin Williams is amusing as Garp, the schoolboy wrestler who runs up and down bleachers to attract Helen Holm's attention, as the boy who has natural lusts despite his mother's dicta. But I had trouble believing in Williams as an intellectual, as a passionate writer, as a serious artist.

Williams has good moments as parent and a happy expectant father. He's good at quick physical action, smacking up speeding trucks, running with Muldoon and leaping fences. But, called to "the sweet sessions of silent thought," Williams disappears in a sweet haze. Making art is sweatwork, like wrestling. Williams doesn't sweat.

James McCall as Young Garp is beguiling. So is Jillian Ross as Young Cuslie. Laurie Rohn as Young Pool scowls a lot, and her malevolent jealousy is obvious, but she doesn't look hurt enough to develop into a really bad seed.

Swoosie Kurtz is marvelous in a cameo as a hooker. She pops up again, fixing tires in the Field's mansion and guarding the door at a feminist service for Jenny. She has a sweet, wicked face, and I wished she'd had more to do. The same goes for Brandon Maggart in his brief, neat performance as Ernie Holm, the wrestling coach.

Amanda Plummer is strong in her single moment as Ellen James. I wanted more of this real stuff, instead of the caricatures of feminists who slide glibly through the film.

Mary Beth Hurt has a tough row to hoe as Helen Holm. She leans on her slim, preppy looks and carries books about like props. I had trouble believing in her professional life. She seems to be an indifferent professor, an indifferent mother and an indifferent wife to Garp. She walks through the movie like a pretty, cool cartoon of a New England lady.

Visually, the movie isn't very exciting. The shot of Garp pulling the blinds open and shut as he watches a sax player across the alley in New York is probably the most poignant. But Glenn Close's face steals the show.



Teacher Helen Garp (Mary Beth Hurt) warns her graduate student, Michael Milton (Mark Soper) to stop his amorous advances in this scene from "The World According to Garp."

MERRICK'S RESTAURANT



2 for 1

We invite you to enjoy one entree when a second entree of equal or greater value is purchased. The lower priced entree will be at no charge.

COUPON VALID Tues.-Wed.-Thurs. EVENINGS ONLY 5:30-9:30

Located at American Center in Southfield

For easy to follow directions and Reservations CALL US AT 353-8144

- Not valid for parties over 10 or in conjunction with other coupons or offers.
- If 3 or more disc, discount applies to least expensive meal.
- Salad Bar Only is considered an Entree.
- Expires 7/31/82
- Present this Coupon
- One coupon per couple
- One check per Table
- This coupon supersedes all other newspaper offers or coupons prior to 4/1/81.

Served DAILY Monday-Friday 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Super Soup Salad and Sandwich Buffet For Just \$3.95

(Plus Menu at Western 8)

Schuler's

12001 W. MICHIGAN RD. SUITE 2000 ROCHESTER, MI 48306

Musicians will tell you... they always "hit a high note" when they turn to the classified columns and discover the best musical buys around.

There's a lot going on in Chester & Eccentric classified ads

REACH MICHIGAN'S FINEST MARKET ONE CALL DOES IT ALL!

There are many ways to tell people what you have for sale.



This is the best way.

→ Chester & Eccentric classified ads

To place an ad, call before 4 p.m. Tuesday for Thursday's paper and 4 p.m. Friday for Monday's paper.

Wayne County 591-0900
Oakland County 644-1070
Rochester/Avon 852-3222

DINING AND ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

ON THE TOWN

12TH ANNUAL SUMMER ARTS FESTIVAL JULY 21, 22, 23, 24

UNIVERSITY ARTISTS AND CRAFTSMEN GUILD

WEDNESDAY-FRIDAY 8AM-5PM EXHIBITION TO INCLUDE SATURDAY 9AM-5PM OVER 600 STATE AND NATIONAL ARTISTS AND CRAFTSMEN

STATE STREET IN FRONT OF THE MICHIGAN UNION AND AT MAIN STREET CHILDREN'S AREA

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT IN FRONT OF THE MICHIGAN UNION JOIN US ALL ARE WELCOME

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 763-4430

Winter Theatre

RAMADA INN

THE MUSICAL HIT

DO! DO!

NANCY GURWIN JOE LANNEN

Friday Performances

DINNER: 7:00 PM SHOW: 8:30 PM TICKETS: \$16.95

20225, TROY, MI, 48063

355-2928

Kingsley Inn HOTEL

Rest Assured...

A thoughtful way to welcome visitors or clients, is a reservation at the Kingsley Inn. We are near all business, sports and educational centers in the tri-county area. Woodward and Long Lake Rd. Bloomfield Hills

Woodward Avenue and Long Lake Road Bloomfield Hills 644-1400