

Handicapped woman sues Brynner

By Margaret Miller
staff writer

Actor Yul Brynner is named in a suit asking \$55,000 damages and costs on behalf of a handicapped young woman who charges he wrongfully had her removed from Masonic Temple in Detroit during a performance of "The King and I."

The suit was filed Friday in Wayne County Circuit Court on behalf of Jane Abler, 21-year-old resident of the Plymouth Center for Human Development. Attorney Ronna J. Stevens of the Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service for Developmentally-Disabled Citizens, Inc. filed the suit.

In a press conference at the Plymouth facility, Stevens described Abler as "not retarded" but victim of a condition like cerebral palsy, characterized by poor motor control and lack of intelligible speech.

"The suit was filed under the Michigan Handicappers Civil Rights Act," she said.

The act provides a person "shall not deny an individual the full and equal enjoyment of the . . . advantages and accommodations of a place of public accommodations or public services because of a handicap that is unrelated to the individual's ability to utilize and benefit" from such services.

"We contend Jane acted appropriately," said Stevens.

ALSO NAMED were the Kingly Co., Masonic Temple Association of Detroit and Nedmas, Inc., a corporation that manages the temple's theater operation.

The suit charges that on Nov. 12 the production company manager ordered Abler taken out of the theater because Brynner complained she was making "inappropriate noises."



Jane Abler is "not retarded" but suffering from a condition characterized by poor motor control and lack of intelligible speech.

The manager, the suit continues, "indicated that if the plaintiff was not removed Yul Brynner would not perform and 'somebody would be embarrassed.'"

The comment, it adds, "was made in the plaintiff's presence without any concern for her feelings."

The action was said to have caused her "embarrassment, humiliation, loss of self-respect and mental distress."

PARTICIPATING with the attorney in the appearance at the Plymouth

Center were Abler, her parents, William and Mary Abler of Brownstown Township, Elizabeth W. Bauer, a member of the center staff and executive director of Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service, George Ebling, administrative assistant, and Margaret Bachman, staff psychologist.

"It's difficult for a parent to allow one of his children to be put in a position like this," William Abler said, "but Jane is a strong-minded girl, and she is adamant that she wants this action."

"She knows she has legal rights in spite of her handicap. We are not going to be here all of her life, so we are supporting her."

Jane Abler also made a statement, using what her father's help a device containing symbols for words. She shows what she wants to say by raising her eyes when the correct word is indicated.

Her statement was: "The man (Brynner) makes me pain, and I want to help handicapped people go to the movies and theater and not feel humiliated."

Jane Abler's handicap was listed in the suit as quadriplegic rotary atetoid due to anoxia at birth.

THE THEATER incident was discussed by participants at the press conference as well as in the legal document.

Ebling pointed out that visits into the community are common for the residents still better in the center. "These made them better able to enter community life later and enhance their life while they are here," he noted.

Bauer noted Abler is a discussion group member, and it was she who suggested taking in "The King and I."

Tickets for center residents and staff were purchased in advance and the theater was informed some users would be in wheelchairs, said attorney Stevens. The developmentally-disabled theatergoers paid for their orchestra section tickets, she added.

The group arrived well before curtain time and was seated. Abler cannot leave her wheelchair, so her chair was located "toward the back of the front section" where it would not obstruct anyone's vision, Stevens said.

According to the suit, staff member Rose Granger was asked just before intermission to take Abler out because Brynner had complained. She said that the usher informed the actor Abler was physically impaired and ask for his compassion.

The response was the action by the production company manager.

The suit said the incident caused Abler to become ill, and she was treated by a Plymouth center physician. She still gets angry when she reads anything about the actor or the show, the suit added.

THE ADVOCACY service, said Bauer, is one mandated by both state and federal laws and funded with money from both levels. Independent of Michigan's Mental Health Department, it represents the handicapped in matters both legal and non-legal.

"Last year we intervened on behalf of the handicapped in more than 3,000 cases, 30 of which required legal action," she said.

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WOODLAND MEDICAL CENTER Nov. 4, 1982 12 Mile Rd. (by Twelve Oaks Mall near Woodward-Road)	Monday, Oct. 4 at 7:30 P.M. Sunday, Oct. 5 at 11:00 A.M.
WOODLAND MEDICAL CENTER Detroit, 22341 W. 8 Mile Rd. (between Telegraph & Leland)	Wednesday, Oct. 6 at 7:30 P.M.

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