

Thursday, February 24, 1983 O&E

Young girl charms in musical at Botsford



The lovely voice matches the fine acting skills of Jody Marie in Nancy Gurwin's production of "The Fantasticks."

Dinner-theater performances of "The Fantasticks," presented by Nancy Gurwin Productions, continue Thursdays and Sundays through March at the Botsford Inn Couch House, 28000 Grand River at Eight Mile, Farmington Hills. Dinner is at 7 p.m., show at 8:30 p.m. Price per person is \$18.95 for dinner and show. For reservations, call 474-4800.

By Cathie Breidenbach
special writer

Jody Marie is luminous as the girl in "The Fantasticks" at the Botsford Inn dinner theater. She glows with wide-eyed innocence and gives Nancy Gurwin's laudable production the glitter that comes only from discovering a star that promises to rise.

Casting a musical is trickier than casting a play, because so many good singers can't really act and many competent actresses can't sing. Jody Marie can really sing. Her voice is full and winning, and she's delightful as the girl in love with love.

"The Fantasticks" by Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt has been around for years and is billed as America's long-

review

est-running play. It enjoys successful revivals because it tells an old story with style and because it has memorable music. The mellow tune "Try to Remember" begins and ends "The Fantasticks."

The play unravels a girl-next-door love story and shows how reality tempers dewy-eyed romanticism. There's compassion in the narrator's tale, some corny laughs mixed with highbrow literary humor and the marvelous music. "The Fantasticks" comments with wit on the problems between parents and their children, and it takes gentle aim at callow romanticism.

DAVE BOKAS is an apt choice for El Gallo, the romantic bandit. He's tall and square-jawed with TV-show-host good looks and a pleasant baritone.

Tom Ferrell carries off well the role of a young man in love. Fran Loud and Denise Hays, who play his parents, sing and dance their way into our affections. If their vaudeville cane duet

lacks synchronized precision, they win over the audience with their idiosyncrasies.

Dike Dwelley is masterful as the threadbare, dotty old thespian, and Dennis George, as the man who dies, smarms his share of laughs with his gymnastic overacting. Deborah De Cocco Sekerak plays the mute mime with graceful simplicity.

Edgar A. Guest directs the musical with an eye for detail. He uses minimal props, like orange and yellow pom-poms for fire and the traditional confetti snow and pieces of colored paper for leaves, to maximum effect. Less becomes more and a delight to the imagination.

At moments we may wish El Gallo would luger over the poetry in the lines or exaggerate his swashbuckling style, but overall the compact staging and pacing by Guest suits well the intimate after-dinner setting. The small orchestra, only two excellent musicians — David Wilson on piano and Krista Critz on harp — also adds to the intimacy.

THE BOTSFORD INN serves an attractive buffet dinner before the play. The menu includes a beef and a seafood



Dave Bokas suits the role of the heartthrob, El Gallo.

entree, a fruit and a potato dish, salad, vegetables, rolls and dessert.

On a recent evening, the seafood entree was red snapper that was moist and not overcooked. A vegetable medley was cooked to crisp perfection. It was a tasty, filling meal, though not gourmet dining.

Dinner theater guests sit eight to a table, an ideal arrangement for parties and family groups and for bringing together strangers who share a table for the evening.

Traditions of folk music surround Michigan area

By Hugh Gallagher
staff writer

The hills and hollows aren't the only places with folk music. Great Lakes ships, logging camps and the streets of Detroit have their own musical traditions.

Robert B. Winans, associate chairman of the Wayne State University English Department, discussed these traditions in a talk on "Folk Music of Michigan and Ohio" Wednesday at the Detroit Historical Museum.

Winans, a banjo picker and a writer on folklore and folk music, makes a distinction between what popular entertainment considers folk music and

what folklorists consider folk music.

The distinction is a "sticky issue," according to Winans. The folk revival of the late '50s brought back Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger and introduced the popular folk styles of the Kingston Trio, Peter, Paul and Mary and Joan Baez. It brought new interest in traditional music, but it also gave the public a distorted view of what folk music is.

"THERE'S A difference in the way in which the music is learned, the uses the music is put to and the mental attitude of the performer toward the music," Winans said.

The real folk singers, said Winans, learn their songs in the community and

pass them down in the community. They sing for the love of it and not for the chance at fame and fortune.

"The popular performer is an entertainer. He does it for pay. The traditional performer only incidentally does it for pay. Historically, you have performers who play at local dances for some money. But there is a major difference in how the music is presented," Winans said.

"The traditional performer is presenting the music for itself. The popular performer uses it to present himself or herself."

American folk music is usually thought of as southern or mountain music. But Michigan and the Detroit area have their own distinct folk traditions,

kept alive by traditional performers.

Winans said Michigan folk music takes many forms because of the state's diversity of population.

"In Detroit, one of its main features is the different ethnic music. Michigan music is ethnic music. The different ethnic groups have longstanding traditions," Winans said.

Before the influx of different ethnic groups at the end of the 19th century, Michigan was settled primarily by people of English, Irish and Scottish ancestry.

These people, who also settled the southern mountain regions, brought the fiddle and banjo tunes that are often associated with the South but have deep roots in the British Isles. In Michi-

gan, these tunes changed to fit the new environment.

"HAMMERED dulcimers became associated with Michigan," Winans said. "This seems to be reviving with several hammered dulcimer groups, particularly the Original Hammered Dulcimer Players Club. They provide a forum for the musicians to play and have developed a repertoire of music that is Michigan."

Winans said that other distinctions of Michigan folk music include a strong French-Canadian influence on fiddle playing and a less prominent role for the banjo.

Another strong ethnic contribution to

Michigan music has been the Afro-American influence.

"Early in the 20th century, you find Detroit was the center for the development of the blues. Important blues performers, many of whom started in Mississippi, made a home in Detroit. One group I may be playing on tape is a black gospel singing group which has roots in traditional music," Winans said.

Lyrically, Michigan music has drawn on the diversity of occupations available. Winans said Michigan is rich in songs about lumbering, mining, railroad and sailing on the Great Lakes.

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