Critics take a look at season's opening dramas

'Madonna' at Actors Alliance

The Michigan premiere of the Actors Alliance. Repertory Theatre production of "Madaman of the Pouder Room" by Paula Citmar continues through Nov. 6 at Lycee International, on Evergreen and 13 Mile roads, Southfield. For ticket information call 642-1326.

By Cathle Braidenbach

A well-acted production of "Madonna of the Powder Room" by Paula Cirmar opens the second season of the Actors Alliance Theatre Company in South-field

field.

The professional theater company is presenting the Michigan premiere of this intense play.

In "Madoma of the Powder Room," six women — three mothers and their grown daughers — gather in Bessie-Puleski's kitchen for Irma Sovik's re-literateria water. They did a notential program of the professional program of the professional profess Puleski's kitchen for Irma Sovik's retirement party. They drink a potent
peachy punch, reminisce, glagle, bicker, dance and cry as they talk their waypast the reassuring woman-lalk and getto what hurts in their lives — dreams
that died and truths that went stale.
Shiriey Benyas is superb as Bessle,
who wants everything clean and nice.
This irritates her daughter, Martie,
played by Donna Reczek with appropriate caustic insensitivity. Evelyn Orbach puts in a gutsy, filen performance
as Irma, once you get over the fact that

she doesn't look nearly old enough to collect social security.

collect social security.

HER DAUGHTER, Violet, smokes grass and sells sprouts in that mecca of instant solutions called California. Irene Schweyer's Violet hangs West Coast loose. She's tasted freedom and knows she needs to connect with people.

Connie McNutt plays the recently widowed Thereas with touching vulnerability. Her daughter, Linda, played by Annette DePetris, must fight against invalued that the word of the people meager freedom. The real rub is that these women know that what they fight against itsn't all bad, and what hey flight for can't guarantee happiness.

ness.

During the war the older women assembled bombs in a factory. It was precise, dangerous work and one woman, the madouna of the title, read aloud to keep their minds to the task. At Irma's retirement party, Irma, Bessie and Theorea, reminisce, about working.

Imma's retirement party, Irma, Bessie and Thereas reminisce about working together 'to win the war." They remember their pride at earning wages and being independent. When the soldiers came bome, Bessie and Thereas lost their jobs and returned to traditional female bome/family/church lives. All the daughters chose to work.

The play offers no formula for happiness—only that everyone deserves the freedom to make her own choices.

'Cyrano' at Meadow Brook

The Meadow Brook Theatre production of Edmond Ras-tands "Cyrano de Bergerac" continues through Oct. 30 on the Oakland University campus near Rochester. For ticket infor-mation call the box office at 377-3000.

In "Cyrano de Bergerac," Meadow Brook director John Ulmer captures the robust, swashbuckling vitality of France in the mid-1800s, the period Edmond Rostand chose for his famous verse play about romantic love.

It was an era when dandies strutted in velvet and plumed finery, when gallant soldiers disdained danger and genitemen wood ladies, with eloquent verse. It's all on the Meadow Brook stage where designer Peter Hicks has created fine period sets.

During a scene change on opening night, the audience applauded in appreciation of the sets, while stagehands worked under a dark proscineum arch.

Act I of "Cyrano" churns with activity. Dozens of players on stage radiate vitality and high floks of the times. Only at moments does the activity lose its finelligent, satirical focus and become mere commotion — as when the jesters' antics border on frantic siliness or when the 'starving' poets wolf celairs in the bakery.

FOR ALL the puns and bombastic furner, sword fights and noise and vibration of cannon fire that would measure at least six on the Richter scale, "Cyrano de Bergerac" is a sad and tender love story.

Eric Tavares brings intelligence and depth to the part of Cyrano, the dashing, blg-nosed hero who's as quick with his sword as he is with his tongue. His richly resonant voice and impeccable delivery are perfect for a hero who knows the power of word as well as be knows the strength of self-sacrificing, romantic love.

Maureen McDevitt as his love, Roxanne, is beautiful and plays a rounded character, not just the stereotyped object of Cyrano's affection. The excellent leads outsine a generally good supporting cast in this play that begins with bolsterous swagger and ends in quiet tendernus.

'Same Time' at Avon Players

The Avon Players production of "Same Time Next Year" by Bernard Slade continues Friday-Sunday and Oct. 21-22 at the playhouse on Washington Road in Rochester. For ticket information call the box office at 658-1130.

"Same Time, Next Year" is filled with laughter and tears and some ultimately forgivable absurdities. The Avon Players kept the emotional element intact and provided us with a pleasant journey

emotional element intact and province us wins a preasant journey back in time.

For those of us who lived through the complacent '50s, the turbuent '50s and the perplexing '70s, that journey, at best, was hilarious and, at worst; a heart-saddening reminder of war, deaths and assassinations. Despite a cranky sound system, the production moved us with actual recordings of the voices of those days: Harry Truman, JFK, Martin Luther King.

We also heard the music: Francis Albert Sinatra, rock 'n' roll, the Beatles, a hint of contemporary rock. We even heard Emile Harwell describing the Tigers' 1989 pennant clincher. This amalgamation of the sounds of our past alone would have guaranteed a good evening.

But Sue Warner and Jim Warner made the evening special. They ortrayed Doris and George, moral strangers led by herepilcable passion to an illicit weekend culminating in a promise to meet yearly on the anniversary of their joining. They executed their roles with sensitivity, love and good humor.

THE LINES by themselves were funny enough, but these two, for the most part, delivered them with just the right inflection and timing. Indeed, a couple of folks in the front row threatened to create their own little scenes, so consumed with laughter were they.

There will be little argument about the play dragging in spots. There were moments when their 24-year-long rendexvous seemed longer. The last scenes were just not as funny or touching as the first. And the one in which George had a telephone, 'let it all hang out,' conversation with Dort's errant husband was simply embarrassing, primarily because of the content. But all in all, this is an amiable production, worthy of packed house.



Evelyn Orbach is Irms Sovik (left) and frene Schweyer is Violet in "Madenna of the Powder Room."

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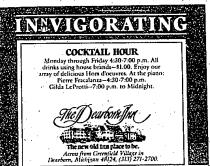


OPENS: FRIDAY, OCT. 14, 8:00 P.M.
RUNNING: OCT. 15, 20, 21, 22, 8:00 P.M.
SUNDAY OCT. 15, 2:00 P.M. Matinea
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EAGLE'S

MILMOM REVENGE OF THE NIN JAPE

ROMANTIC THE ROMELY LADY

