

# Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



(O11C)

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Jiff Nahan (left) plays the title role and David Fox is Geronte in the Actors Alliance Theatre Company production of Molliero's classic comedy "Scapin."

## Cast of 'Scapin' should lighten up

The Actors Alliance Theatre Company presents "Scapin" by Molliero through Dec. 17 at Lycee International, 30800 Evergreen Road, Southfield. For ticket information, call 642-1328.

By Cathie Breidenbach  
special writer

The Actors Alliance production of Molliero's "Scapin" is slow to get laughter rolling. A farce should make the audience laugh out loud, but it isn't until the second act that the audience responds to the antics and foibles of the characters with wholehearted laughter.

Perhaps the rub is that some of

### review

the characters take themselves too seriously. Humor is a contagious pleasure that's best communicated by people who can laugh at themselves.

The cast played Scapin with slapstick style and considerable energy but could have hammed it up even more.

Updated classics run the risk of losing the irreverent humor that originally made them funny. The Actors Alliance's "Scapin" doesn't

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## Kurt Weill: 'Labor of Love' offers his songs

There's a labor of love going on at the corner of Third and West Grand Boulevard in Detroit. The guiding spirit behind it is Phil Marcus Esser, the singer-songwriter-director-producer who's best known around here for introducing metro Detroit to dinner theater and to "Jacques Breil Is Alive and Well and Living in Paris."

His new effort is called "Labor of Love" and it's a stunning musical revue of the songs of German composer Kurt Weill. A longtime fan of Weill's music, Esser did a one-time-only show in 1980 that celebrated the relationship between Weill and his wife Lotte Lenya. This show is a re-mounting of that one and it features not only Esser but singers Barbara Bredius, Jonathan Round, Monika Ziegler, Tamra Klemek and Melvyn Hardiman.

THE MUSIC comes from such well-known shows as "Three Penny Opera," "The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny," "Street Scene," "Lady in the Dark" and "Lost in the Stars." That music got to Phil Esser, a resident of Livonia, years ago. "When I was working the clubs in Chicago," recalls Esser, "there was this one act that sang Kurt Weill's music. Then, in Detroit, I found out that three of the songs Chuck Mitchell used to sing were Weill songs. Weill's melodies hooked me."

Full of strange constructions, melodic twists and turns and arduous lyrics, Weill's music is haunting. Once the word gets out about how good this show is, the intimate theater — that was formerly a movie theater — could be filled for the scheduled 11 more weeks of the show's run.

TROY GUITARIST Joe LoDuca, who's getting plenty of national expo-

sure — not to mention a recent Emmy — for his "Late Night America Theme," has released a single of the theme that's heard across the country five nights a week on the Public TV show hosted by Dennis Whaley.

"There's been a lot of call-in response to the theme music," says LoDuca, "and it's being used at this point as a promotional vehicle for the show."

Beyond that, though, LoDuca sees the single release of the popular theme as a first step toward an album (his first album, "Glisten," is already in the local record stores) showcasing his present group.

LoDuca says he wrote the "Late Night America Theme" music on request of the show's producers, and he tried to gear it to the mood and feeling of the show. "We got lucky with it, though," contends LoDuca.

HOW MUCH of a role does luck play in musical success? That's a debatable issue. But, take a group like the Canadian Brass.

You wouldn't expect five classically trained brass musicians to be able to command much of an audience around the world. Yet, here they are as a celebrated quintet. Their brassy sound has caught on, as they've had to transcribe music so they could play it because there were so few brass works written.

Brethren Productions, a fairly new two-couple production outfit in Detroit, took a chance last year and brought the Canadian Brass to Detroit. The response was excellent, says LaVoca Neale, one of the four people connected to Brethren Productions. "It was a wonderful, stand-up, foot-stomping event," says Neale.

Consequently, the Canadian Brass is back for a show with its gold-plated instruments at 4 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 11, at



on music  
James  
Windell

Detroit's Orchestra Hall. The music will be a typical loveable marmalade with everything from Bach, Handel and Purcell to Jelly Roll Morton, Scott Joplin and Fats Waller.

WEST BLOOMFIELD'S Misha Rachlevsky hasn't played Fats Waller yet, but the Detroit Symphony Orchestra first violinist and tireless classical music composer has taken on bluegrass.

The results of the "duelin' violin" square-off with Nashville fiddler Buddy Spicher at the benefit opening of Pontiac's Summit Place Mall last Oct. 30 was so successful that further plans are in the works.

Rachlevsky and PR Works' whiz Pat Patton are talking about a record album combining bluegrass and classical music. Sound kinky? Well, you better believe that the Moscow Conservatory-trained Rachlevsky can pull it off. It was a happening on the 30th and it's a natural for the first album of its kind.

SPEAKING OF first. Can it be that Fat Bob Taylor has never recorded an album? Until now. Yes it is true. The erstwhile singing plumber has finally got an album and it's just in time for

Christmas. Called "Bob Taylor Celebrates Christmas" and produced by Brothers Records of Rochester, the album is a very listenable collection of traditional Christmas songs. Just right for every Bob Taylor fan. Among the songs that should please lovers of both Taylor's voice and Christmas songs are "On Holy Night," "Birthdays of the King" and "Ave Maria." In addition, there's a new Christmas song co-written by deejay Taylor.

The new Christmas song is titled "Christmas in Michigan" and is a cheery celebration of the yuletide season in this area. It just happens to be appealing enough to make most people who weary of the "same old Christmas songs" to give this a listen.

"The nice thing about a Christmas album," says Ann Arbor resident Taylor, "is that you can bring it out every year and know that it's going to get about 26 days of play. The thing is, though, no one ever really tires of Christmas music."

The album is available at Harmony House outlets and a few other record stores in the area.

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