

# Love in the afternoon — at the mall

By Teri Denes  
staff writer

The shoppers in the Livonia Mall had plenty of advice for Dr. Seneca Beaulac last week when New York actor John Gabriel stopped in to sign a few autographs and promote a new business venture.

"I think he looks too skinny," concluded one woman, loaded with purchases made at the bustling sidewalk sales that day in the mall. Her friend agreed. "He looks better on TV," she said upon eyeing the tall, very tanned and very lean actor.

Appearance aside, though, most of the shoppers were concerned about the good doctor's "love life" or "Ryan's Hope," the ABC soap opera he's starred in the past nine years. The biggest lament in Livonia land was that while most characters in the steamy soap opera world are falling in love and falling into bed, Beaulac is sidelined where the action's concerned.

"He should have more affairs," said 14-year-old Donna Iacovacci of Detroit confiding in her mother's presence that she was a "closet" soap watcher until she bought her own TV.

"He's very seldom on right now," said LaDeen Williams of Livonia. "I'm going to think it's either an uneven girl (on the show for Seneca) but they all seem to be taken up."

"He needs to get away from the clutches of Jillian," surmised Novi resident Fran Caruso, 59, speaking about another RH character and Seneca's longstanding love interest.

"Frank (Jillian's) longstanding love interest on the show) is a wimp. She should grab Seneca; he's a strong character."

GABRIEL'S day started at 5 a.m. when he got up to make personal appearances on "Rally and Co." and "Soyas" before moving into the Livonia Mall. From there, he was shuffled into a long black limousine and whisked to Troy, where he had lunch at Uptown Charlie's before doing it all over again at the Oakland Mall. He had arrived in Detroit the previous night and had dinner in Grosse Pointe's New Hellas, which he found "quite wonderful."

The reason for the Detroit day-tour was to promote "Soap Opera Update" which began airing on WMMC-radio in Detroit last month. With Gabriel as its host, the program is heard 10:50 a.m. and 4:50 p.m. weekdays.

Another new venture in the wind are some television spots he will co-host with his wife, Sandy Gabriel, called "Trivia with John and Sandy." The 30-second spots will probably air in the fall, he said. He likened the pairing with his wife of 16 years to a "Burns and Allen format." Sandy Gabriel is a soap-star in her own right, playing the character of "Edna" on "All My Children," another ABC soap.

For background, Gabriel's career began under contract for Fox Studios during which time the young actor starred in such movies as "The Hunters" and "The Story of Ruth." Sixteen years ago he returned to New York, his birthplace, and performed in a number of notable Broadway shows. To this day, he still makes singing appearances in clubs across the country. Then, his agent suggested he audition for a 13-day job on "Love of Life" that turned into a three-year stint and "I decided I liked it," Gabriel said.

WHILE Gabriel is branching out into other work now, he has no plans to leave "Ryan's Hope" for the moment. He recently signed a two-year contract, he said.

As for what's happening or not happening with his character, Gabriel appeared undisturbed when he explained: "Right now there's a lot of new characters coming on the show, becoming established, so some of the regulars are on the side a bit, but all that changes. Right now I'm (meaning Dr. Beau-



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

John Gabriel, star of the daytime soap opera "Ryan's Hope" and host of the daily "Soap Spot," signs autographs at Livonia Mall.

luc) dealing with Della and trying to expose her in her involvement in causing her husband's heart attack."

Meanwhile, the shoppers and business people in the mall last week seemed to enjoy have a "celebrity" around, particularly one who so patiently and politely autographed and addressed scores of publicity photos.

"I think they should do this more often," said Virginia Blaszczyk, 52, of Farmington Hills. "The mall is too blah, it needs excitement." Assistant marketing director Debbie Wanasakker said it's been five years "since we had

one (celebrity) out. I think we'll be bringing in a Tiger player next. We'll also be having Zippy the Chimp for our next sidewalk sales."

Not to overshadow Zippy, but there was another animal act in the mall last week, on the opposite side from Gabriel's appearance. Positioned on a plastic tarp was Sagoriot, mascot to the Wayne County Sheriff's Department, there to promote a child's fingerprinting program.

# Light program lures big crowd

For those of us who are used to the audiences at classical events, the pop event at Hudson Block Friday brought a totally different experience.

One of the main attractions was the renowned Canadian Brass, featuring five extremely versatile musicians. The conductor, Richard Hayman, a person with an outgoing and flamboyant personality, has appeared with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra on numerous occasions.

There was an almost mile-long stretch of cars lined up on Wallon Blvd. leading to the entrance. Such a scene is unprecedented in classical events, which at least from my selfish point of view, might be just as well. Contending with a major traffic snarl on a weekly basis would be too much.

In spite of this enormous turnout, the pavilion was even less full than in some of the classical events, until subsequent occupation by spectators who were unable to find a decent space on the crowded lawn.

While this program wasn't very keen in meeting more rigorous musical standards, it obviously attracted many people whose exposure to the Detroit Symphony Orchestra is otherwise limited. The relaxed musical standards, however, were compensated for with high entertainment value.

CONDUCTOR Hayman appeared on stage in a flashy outfit, with a shirt of colorful, flowery patterns. The opening selection was an arrangement of popular tunes from Rodgers and Hammerstein's "South Pacific." While the performance was rather casual, it was nevertheless music with which most of the audience could fondly and nostalgically identify.

Large portions of the program were put in place shortly before the date of the performance. One of the unscheduled guests was Kathy Foy, a former beauty queen of Hawaii, who came as a musical ambassador to



Avigdor Zaromp

represent that exotic state.

She sang a number of songs from or about Hawaii. While her voice wasn't of the kind one finds among top opera stars, the spirit and gestures seemed to be more important and were extremely well received.

The Canadian Brass, with their shiny, gold instruments, turned out to be a stellar attraction. Some of their selections commemorated Duke Ellington, and their mass appeal was tremendous.

OTHER selections were light classical (or, perhaps, lightly sprinkled classical). These included the Perpetuum Mobile by Johann Strauss, the Pachelbel Canon and the "Little Fugue" G minor by Bach. The Strauss piece, which was done at a fast tempo, was extremely amusing, including the contortions of the trombone player, who was trying as best as he could to accomplish the impossible feat.

While the Bach fugue was far from an authentic Bach, which would have been out of place here, it was an authentic entertainment.

The concluding piece on the program was the 1812 Overture, whose appeal is beyond what words can describe. To be sure, the musical quality of the performance was one of the most atrocious I have ever heard but it didn't seem to matter very much.

The climax was ear shattering cannon blasts, activated by remote-control. Most certainly few things prove to be as universally appealing as a BIG BANG.

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