

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



1090

Theater: All in the family

By Ethel Simmons
staff writer

THEATER IS THEIR LIFE for the Henry K. Martin family of Bloomfield Hills. Martin is a producer-director, with shows throughout the United States and in Canada. Wife Sue is a professor, who heads the School of Dramatic Art at the University of Windsor across the river.

Daughter Pamela, 19, is a student there, in her second year working toward a bachelor of fine arts in the acting program. Son David, 15, who attends Seaholm High School, dreams of a career in baseball but in the meantime appears in his father's Actor's Trunk Company productions of children's classics.

Most metropolitan Detroiters have long been familiar with Henry Martin's theatrical endeavors, going back to the 1960s when he headed a comedy troupe presenting satirical revues. The Actor's Trunk has played at area shopping centers, community centers and schools, as well as at the Michigan State Fairgrounds.

In recent years Martin has been touring the country with the Actor's Trunk, presenting his stage shows of fairy tales, which he has rewritten especially for live children's theater.

He also is bringing some of the best of Canadian theater and dance, with Canadian talent, to the Cleary Auditorium in Windsor, for an international audience from both sides of the border to enjoy.

SUE MARTIN has many facets to her career as a teacher and administrator in theater at the University of Windsor. Her multifarious responsibilities include supervising a master workshop series, visiting stars, and running the University Players,

which produces some half-dozen shows each year. She was honored in 1981 for teaching excellence by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations. Her background also includes writing, collecting and reviewing children's literature.

Together, Henry and Sue Martin sponsor a troupe of Canadian actors who tour in children's productions. The Martins, who lived in Birmingham when they were first married, celebrated their 21st wedding anniversary Nov. 30. The intervening years have seen them realize many of their personal and professional goals.

One recent morning, Henry and Sue took an hour-plus from their busy schedules to meet over coffee and bran muffins at Richard and Reese's in Birmingham, for an interview. Listening to a rundown of their activities is enough to take your breath away, as you realize how they must juggle their time to keep up with their consuming interests.

Both are gracious along with being businesslike. Henry is comfortably dressed and relaxed. Sue is slim and sleek in black.

Talking about her work as director of the University of Windsor's School of Dramatic Art, Sue said, "There's also a School of Music and a School of Fine Arts. It's the only campus in Canada that has three schools. It's quite unique."

SHE STARTED at the university in 1972 as assistant professor in the School of Dramatic Art. "I taught until 1981," she said. That was the year she won the OCUFA award for teaching excellence.

"She was the first person in Windsor ever to receive it," Henry pointed out.

Sue was the school's acting director 1983-84 and interim director from Jan-

uary 1984 until July, when she was appointed director.

"My hobby is children's literature, which led to an interest in storytelling and creative drama," she said. "At the School of Dramatic Art I designed the drama-in-education degree program, the only one of its kind in Ontario."

The degree program, which provides training to teach students from preschool to high school, emphasizes "the use of drama to develop the child to greater potential and the use of drama in teaching basics."

The School of Dramatic Art offers two main degrees, a bachelor of fine arts in acting, for training future professionals, and the drama-in-education degree. Both are four-year honors programs. Sue said, "There is a total of five degrees. These are the two biggest."

SUE'S FIRST publication was a book called "Sprouts," creative projects for development of the child's growth. A second book, "Treasure Hunt," is an introduction to classic literature for children via creative methods. Her third book, published in September, is "Research Workout," training in research skills via creative play.

Henry joked, "She does for the child's mind what Jane Fonda's workout does for the body."

Good Apple of Chicago is the publisher of all three books. The worth of the books is accentuated by the fact that they were picked up by the Scholastic Book of the Month.

"They use acting techniques, mime, creative play, creative movement, choral reading, tableaux and creative acting as vehicles for teaching lessons," Sue said.

At the School of Dramatic Art, an internship working with learning-disabled children is offered as part of the drama-in-education study. "It's a form

of play therapy. It's a unique program," she said.

THE UNIVERSITY Players, which Sue handles, is in its 21st season and plays to an audience of 14,000 theatergoers a year. Recent productions included "The Miracle Worker," in November, and "The Magic Apple," a children's show, for Christmas, in early December.

Of the later show, Henry said with a good-natured smile, "They're my competition. I don't care!"

An important part of the students' theatrical training is the master workshop series, which Sue introduced. "We bring outstanding professionals to interact with acting students," she said. The first was Len Cariou of Winnipeg, who was the Stratford Festival's leading actor and won a Tony award on Broadway as best actor, in "Sweeney Todd."

Nicholas Pennell of the Stratford Festival was another, and the third was Peter Ustinov, international star and man of the arts. At a recent luncheon, plans were made with Martha Henry, a longtime Stratford star who is originally from Birmingham, to be the guest professional in March.

Said Henry, "Fortunately for us, the ones who have come down so far have been marvelous."

Because the project has been successful, the university has allocated funds to support it.

THE SCHOOL of Dramatic Art has a total of 150 majors. "Our bachelor of fine arts in acting program is the oldest program in Canada," Sue said.

With husbandly pride, Henry declared, "I just think it's kind of cute that every morning, Monday to Friday, Sue gets in her car and goes to work in another country."

Henry Martin is a producer-director,



GARY CASKEY/staff photographer

Henry Martin, wife Sue and their children, Pamela, 19, and David, 15, are all involved in theater, including acting, teaching, directing and producing.

with many years in the entertainment business nationwide. "I have directed industrial or business shows or some of the top corporations in the United States," he said. "I'm producer for the-

ater for children, which I do across the United States as well. I also write (children's) plays myself. I adapt them for the stage."

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