

# Season offers comedy, drama

By Victoria Diaz  
special writer

**A**UTUMN IS WAITING in the wings and, with it, a new season for community theater.

Playgoers in Livonia, Redford, Garden City, Plymouth and Westland can look forward this year to a veritable cornucopia of colorful characters in productions that will range from light comedy to heavy drama. Interspersed with contemporary pieces will be plenty of old favorites — and maybe even a few surprises.

Behind the scenes, script-reading committees from the Garden City Civic Theatre, the Theatre Guild of Livonia-Redford, the Plymouth Theatre Guild and the Spotlight Players of Wayne-Westland have been busy going over scripts since early in the year. Final selections for this season were made around the beginning of the summer, according to publicists for the various groups.

Herein, their choices for the 1985-86 season:

**IN ITS 32nd year,** the Theatre Guild of Livonia-Redford will launch its season with Jane Martin's "Talking With," an award-winning play with an eclectic cast of characters, including a bawdy twister, a mad housewife, a snide banker and a tattooed woman. In a contemporary setting, Martin's play is actually a series of monologues running the gamut from comedy to pathos.

In November, TGLR will present "Baby," an upbeat musical, which traces the experiences of three "expectant" couples in a small college

town. The musical was nominated for a Tony award last year.

Next, TGLR will offer William Mastrosimone's "Extremities," a highly dramatic depiction of an attempted rape, which debuted in New York in 1983.

The guild will conclude its season in May with "Beyond Therapy," a comedy by Christopher Durang, about a couple undergoing therapy, their relationships with each other and with their therapists, and how they learn to go on living beyond therapy.

"One of our goals is to not do productions that have already been done everywhere," said Sarah Hope, publicity chairman for TGLR, when asked what factors are taken into consideration as the guild plans its upcoming season. "We try to do new, exciting, original work. Our audiences are real theater fans and very selective people. We try to cater to that."

**OVER AT Garden City Civic Theatre,** there's good news for fans of musicals this year. The group, which attracted its largest audiences in the past two years to go with not one but two musicals.

GCTC's season will open Oct. 18 with Rodgers and Hammerstein's "The Sound of Music" and close in May with "Stop the World, I Want to Get Off." In between will be Joe Mantegna's "Bleacher Bums," an adult comedy set in a present-day baseball park.

"Bleacher Bums" is different than anything we've done before," said



**Victoria Diaz**

GCTC publicist Mike Rothaar, adding that the group decided to do an adult comedy this year — after choosing the two musicals — to provide more balanced entertainment for theatergoers. "Bleacher Bums" is a character study, really — a bit like "Chorus Line," without the music," Rothaar explained. "We were after a light, upbeat season (when we chose 'Bleacher Bums')." Rothaar said the GCTC production of the play will mark the critically acclaimed show's debut in the Detroit area.

**THE PLYMOUTH Theatre Guild** will open its 39th season with Paul Loomis' "For Her Child's Sake," a melodrama, complete with hero, heroine and rascally, mustachioed villain. Following will be William Inge's 1933 drama, "Picnic," the story of a drifter who comes to a small town, and the changes he brings about in the lives of several women who live there.

Closing the season in May will be "Everybody Loves Opal." Described by playwright John Patrick as "a prank in three acts," the comedy centers around kindly, optimistic Opal and three shady characters who use her home as a hide-out, as they concoct Opal's demise — in order to get their hands on her money.

"We try to be very conscientious about presenting (plays) the community will like," said Publicity Director Gail Messer. "Everybody Loves Opal," for instance, is a traditional old favorite — something that's well-loved and that just about every community theater does.

"As to 'For Her Child's Sake,' Plymouth really likes melodrama, and we've always had good attendance at melodramas we've done in the past. They're

something the entire family can come to, of course. A few years ago, when we did 'The Work at the Crossroads,' we passed out bags of popcorn at the door, so playgoers could throw popcorn at the villain." Messer said that the guild hopes to do the same this year.

**SPOTLIGHT PLAYERS** of Wayne-Westland will begin its 24th season in October with Elizabeth Diggs' "Close Ties," a drama of the relationships among an aging grandmother, her children and grandchildren. In February, the players will do "Madwoman of Chaillet," Jean Giraudoux's comic fable of bizarre characters in turn-of-the-century Paris. The Spotlight Players season will close in April with "No Sex Please, We're British," a British farce written by Anthony Marriott and Alistair Foot.

"We're really getting kind of international this year," Spotlight Players President Debra Polch-Swain said with a laugh. The players' script-selection committee, along with members interested in directing, considered more than 20 plays before picking the final three.

"We choose plays with several things in mind — the ages of group members, how expensive the play will be to produce, whether it's a 'name show' that will be familiar to audiences, and audience interest. Recently, we've tried to steer away from typical community theater offerings.

"We chose to do 'Close Ties' this year because we think it is very pertinent to our times. And we selected 'No Sex Please, We're British' because it's really a very funny play."



Artist depicts scenes from stage productions "Talking With" (above) and "The Sound of Music." Theatre Guild of Livonia-Redford will present the monologues "Talking With," Oct. 11-12, 18-19, and 25-26, as its season's opener. Garden City Civic Theatre will do the musical "The Sound of Music," Oct. 18-19, 25-27 and Nov. 1-2, as the group's first show of the new season.

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The film is available for the first time in its un-

cut Technicolor version. Tickets at \$2.50 are available in advance at the art institute ticket office and at the door. For further information, call the DIA ticket office at 832-2730 during regular business hours.

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