

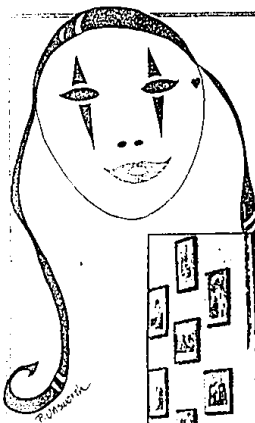
# Creative Living

Marle McGee editor/591-2300



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## Victorian comeback

### Musicals add life to restored Marquis

By Arlene Funke  
special writer

**V**ISITING THE historic Marquis Theater is like stepping into an elegant Victorian parlor.

Owner Inge Zayt and her husband, Jay, restored the Northville theater — believed to be built in the early 1900s — in 1978. Now Zayt produces stage shows in a setting of antiques, delicate china art objects and stained-glass windows.

In an unusual arrangement, the theater is sandwiched between two women's apparel stores, both of which Inge Zayt operates on Main Street in downtown Northville. Prior to the renovation, the theater was vacant and in disrepair.

"IT LOOKED SO bad I never told anybody I owned the theater," said Zayt, 45. "The city said you have to fix it or tear it down."

Neither of the Zayts has had formal theatrical training. Jay Zayt operates a trucking company. Inge, who grew up in Germany, has studied art and over the years has developed a love of art and theater.

"You have to have a feel for it," she said in a voice that still reflects her German heritage.

The couple took the plunge and restored the dilapidated theater at

a cost of \$250,000. Numerous old coats of paint were stripped away, new seats were installed and the roof fixed. Air-conditioning and heating were brought up to code.

The refurbishing, which took four months to complete, unearthed many old treasures. The theater's original glass French doors were found intact under a covering of plywood panels. Old brass doorknobs were found backstage and were restored to their original condition and placed on the glass doors.

"I saw all the stuff that was there," Inge Zayt said. Restoration excitement began to build "after I saw all that stuff. I began getting really interested. I gave it a good shot."

ZAYTI ISN'T SURE exactly how old the theater is. Records show the building was constructed in 1921, but Zayti believes it may have been built earlier, then damaged by a fire.

"Old-timers say it was much earlier," she said. "I believe it may have been in the 1910s."

According to a theater brochure, the building was built as an opera house and later presented vaudeville. Charlie Chaplin and Mary Pickford reportedly performed at the Marquis.

The refurbished lobby, remini-

scent of a Victorian parlor, is done in red and gold. It is highlighted by green and red stained-glass and leaded-glass windows. A fringed lamp, popular in bygone days, sits atop an antique white piano.

An imposing Louis XVI cabinet, circa 1780, is filled with delicate china teapots and cups. White wicker and red armchairs beckon.

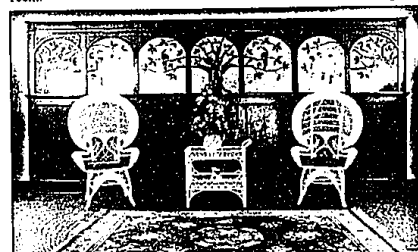
Antique china dolls perch on tables covered with lace and linen cloths. More are quaintly perched on the stairway leading to what was once the movie projection room.

On the walls throughout the lobby area hangs a personal collection of handpainted harlequin facial masks. The masks are now one of her advertising trademarks.

"Some of the stuff was in my family and some we bought at auctions," Zayti said.

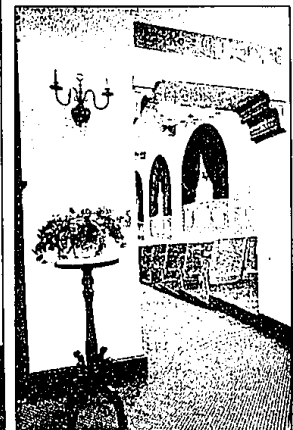
THE 450-SEAT THEATER has an intimate feeling of warmth and elegance of a bygone era. While the stage itself is smaller than most directors would like it to be, it is adequate.

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Stained-glass window panels are complemented by Victorian-era wicker in the theater lobby.

The theater lobby gives the feeling of being in an elegant Victorian parlor. Below, a view into the theater from the lobby. At the right is another view showing a collection of China dolls and facial masks.



Staff photos by  
Bill Bresler

## Versatility helps musical director score

By Arlene Funke  
special writer

**T**HE ARTS and music "make life worth living," said Livonia orchestra conductor Douglas Morrison.

Morrison's chosen lifestyle brings a fresh set of challenges, both artistic and financial, each day.

"What we do is important for people — whether it's music, plays, drama — it takes people away from the problems of the world," Morrison said. "The problems are there, but it makes people happy and to be able to do that is really special."

At 32, Morrison has conducted orchestras for opera, ballet, symphony and chorale groups. His most recent stint at conducting was for the community theater production of "Carousel" at the Marquis Theater in Northville where he's also been known to be on stage in an acting role.

"Versatility — that's what it takes to be a conductor," Morrison said.

Conducting an orchestra entails much more than standing before a group of musicians, clad in tuxedo and waving a baton.

MORRISON SAYS he spends hours painstakingly listening to tapes of musical scores for an opera. He auditions both trained musicians and eager beginners hoping to be hired for a theater production.

Last year, he became co-founder of the Michigan Lyric Opera Company, which seeks to perform opera in English at affordable prices. "One of the biggest ideas behind the concept is to give area singers a chance to perform," Morrison said.

With his carefully groomed hair and friendly demeanor, Morrison more closely resembles an up-and-coming business executive than a musical conductor. Still, Morrison is living a dream that began when

he was an eighth grader growing up in the small town of Holt, near Lansing.

"It's a neat place," Morrison said. "It has that small-town flavor."

Morrison's father is the fire chief in Holt. His mother is housekeeper for the governor's residence.

AS A YOUTH, Morrison formed small musical groups. He played the French horn while attending Michigan State University, where he earned a bachelor of arts degree in music literature. He obtained a master of music degree from George Washington University.

Morrison gained practical experience as a conductor while doing his military service. While spending three years at the Armed Forces School of Music in Norfolk, Va., he auditioned, rehearsed and conducted bands of all types.

Later, Morrison studied privately with Dr. Valter Poolo, the late and renowned conductor of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

"Music is so subjective," Morrison said. "You never stop questioning, you never stop listening, keeping fresh."

Morrison said all arts groups suffer from chronic funding woes. He holds many positions in order to earn a living.

For example, he is currently the conductor of the Scandinavian Symphony, an orchestra originally composed of musicians of Scandinavian descent. The symphony, which recently completed its fifth season, performs at Southfield High School.

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Douglas Morrison

