

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



(T.R. 60X)SC

Thursday, October 2, 1986 O&E

Theaters look to lively seasons

By Cathie Breidenbach
special writer

THE UPCOMING theater season offers dozens of comedy and musical productions to tickle your funny bone and set your feet tapping.

To balance the lighter fare, professional and community theaters in Oakland County will produce a number of classic dramas and mystery intrigues during the season.

In recent years the divisions between drama, comedy and musicals have blurred, as more and more productions integrate music, serious drama and comedy into the same show. It's not a new idea. Will Shakespeare was a memorable master of the technique, but the results of the trend make for a theater season both rich and lively.

MEADOW BROOK THEATRE at Oakland University in Rochester Hills opens with "Richard III," Shakespeare's tale of the hunch-backed king who reputedly had his nephews murdered in the Tower of London. In this powerful drama, which runs Thursday, Oct. 9, to Sunday, Nov. 2, Shakespeare created his most fascinating villain.

The Detroit-area premiere of "Foxfire," written by Susan Cooper and Hume Cronyn and billed as a folk comedy with music, will run Nov. 6-30. Ebenezer Scrooge will be back Dec. 4-28, by popular demand. In Dickens' joyous holiday story, "A Christmas Carol," Meadow Brook begins the New Year with the passionate conflict of Sicilian folk-folk in Tennessee Williams' moving drama, "The Rose Tattoo," which runs Jan. 1-25.

George Feydeau's hilarious French farce, "A Flea in her Ear," tells a tale of a wife who suspects her husband of fooling around. "Flea," set in Paris at the turn of the century, runs Jan. 29 to Feb. 22, to be followed by the Detroit-area premiere of Hugh Whitmore's "A Pack of Lies." This engrossing drama about Russian espionage in Britain centers on a Scotland Yard investigation.

Woody Allen puts his comic genius to work on the subject of romance in "Play It Again, Sam," which runs March 26 to April 19. Meadow Brook will end the season with the Agatha Christie thriller, "Go Back for Murder," set to run April 23 to May 17.

Call 337-3300 for ticket information on Meadow Brook Theatre productions.

THE BIRMINGHAM THEATRE steps lightly into its season with Bob

Fosse's exhilarating dance extravaganza, appropriately called "Dancin'," which runs Sept. 30 to Oct. 26. Neil Simon's "The Odd Couple" gets a new twist when Oscar and Felix become Olive and Florence in the classic comedy to run Nov. 4-30. "Fiddler on the Roof" comes to the Birmingham Dec. 30 to Jan. 25, with the incomparable music of Block and Harnick and the warmth of the unforgettable farmer/philosopher, Tevye.

The singing and dancing little sisters of Hoboken make light in "Nunsense" to run Feb. 10 to March 8. Then "Evita" commands the Birmingham stage March 17 to April 12. The fascinating tale about Argentina's controversial Evita Peron is set to music by the composer of "Cats." "Little Shop of Horrors," to run May 5-31, closes the season on a funny high note.

For ticket information about productions at the Birmingham Theatre on Woodward Avenue just south of Maple Road, call 644-9225.

NANCY GURWIN PRODUCTIONS is doing shows this season at the Jewish Community Center on Maple and Drake roads in West Bloomfield. Gurwin's first show, "Funny Girl," in which she plays the irrepressible entertainer Fanny Brice, ran for six performances in September. She will produce the moving drama, "The Diary of Anne Frank," which begins Nov. 16, followed in March by "Anything Goes," with Cole Porter's memorable music.

Call 661-1000 for ticket information on Nancy Gurwin's shows at the Jewish Community Center.

THE ACTORS ALLIANCE THEATRE COMPANY is pursuing new ventures this season including a revival of last year's successful Christmas production, "Miracle on 34th Street," which will play at Detroit's Orchestra Hall during Thanksgiving Week Nov. 23-25 in three matinee performances for student groups. The limitations of Actor Alliance's previous home in the gym of the International School in Southfield led artistic director Jeff Nahan to ramp plans for this season and find larger houses to stage productions. Other season plans include reviving the thought-provoking play, "The Women Here Are No Different," during Women's Awareness Week March 8-15.

Most promising of the theater's special projects is a Festival of New Michigan Plays, which Actors Alliance will stage in conjunction with Michigan's sesquicentennial in June

and July. The company will select four plays from those submitted and produce them to honor Michigan artists.

Call 642-1326 for information about Actors Alliance's special projects and their theater education program at the International School.

WILL-O-WAY REPERTORY THEATRE in its new Birmingham location on Cole just east of Eton opens the season with the current production "A Touch of Spring," a comedy in Rome with international romantic complications. Students in Will-O-Way's theater classes will stage two matinee performances Nov. 30 and Dec. 7 of "Juvie," a one act about juvenile delinquents in a police bull pen. For the holidays, Dec. 5 to Jan. 4, Will-O-Way will run "Something's Afoot," the spoof on Agatha Christie billed as a musical murder mystery.

For ticket reservations or information on Will-O-Way's theater arts classes, call 644-4418.

JIMMY LAUNCE PRODUCTIONS' SOMERSET DINNERS THEATRE at Somerset Mall on W. Big Beaver Road in Troy opens with "Squabblers," to run Friday, Oct. 10, to Jan. 17. In this family comedy, mayhem and love blossom when in-laws, one of his and one of hers, move in with a young couple. As part of the dinner theater package, theatergoers may choose to dine before the show either at the Cafe Jardin or at Sebastian's, both in Somerset Mall. Call 640-6629 for ticket information.

AVON PLAYERS opens its season laughing with the British bedroom farce, "Move Over Mrs. Markham," which plays weekends through Saturday, Oct. 11, at the Avon Playhouse on Rochester Road just off Tienken Road in Rochester Hills. On the weekends Nov. 7-22, Avon will stage "Alone Together," a comedy about a couple whose grown children move back in with them one by one. "Nuts," a drama about a prostitute on trial for murder, is tentatively



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Will-O-Way Repertory Theatre, which had troubled finances, is back for another season in Birmingham. Carl Fishe (left), Louis Jaros,

C.J. Nodus and Robert Dunn perform in the season's opener, "A Touch of Spring" continuing through Saturday, Oct. 25.

scheduled for the weekends of Feb. 27 to March 14 and will be followed by the blockbuster musical that Lauren Bacall made famous on Broadway, "Woman of the Year," "Woman" runs weekends April 30 to May 16.

For ticket information, call 739-4660.

BIRMINGHAM VILLAGE PLAYERS has opened with the comedy-thriller, "The Butler Did It," a play within a play with a twist at the end to outsmart even accomplished mystery buffs. "Butler" runs through the weekend of Friday-Saturday, Oct. 3-4, and will be followed by the musical "Two by Two," with music by Richard Rodgers and Martin Charlin. "Two by Two" plays weekends Nov. 21 to Dec. 6 and tells of the tribulations of Noah and his family during the Great Flood.

On Jan. 30-31, Feb. 1, 6-7, the Birmingham Village Players will stage Lillian Hellman's compelling drama, "The Children's Hour," at its vintage playhouse near downtown Birmingham. Then Neil Simon lights the stage with "The Last of the Red Hot Lovers," a comedy about a middle-aged man who decides he's overdue for a romantic fling. The players' last offering of the season will be "Invitation to a March," with performances May 15-17, 22-23.

FARMINGTON PLAYERS opens its season with "The Dining Room," a humorous tour de force that comments on WASP lifestyles over a period of more than 50 years. "Dining Room" will play weekends from Oct. 24 to Nov. 15, at the Farmington Players Barn on 12 Mile in Farmington Hills.

"The Ocelotte Bridge Club," the players' second production, tells the tale of eight sisters who meet every week for 10 years to play bridge. Beneath the light bridge-table chatter swirl heavier undercurrents in this comedy, which runs weekends Jan. 23 to Feb. 14. "The Good Doctor," a collection of Chekhov's tender/comic stories adapted for the theater by Neil Simon, will close the Farmington Players season. "Doctor" runs weekends April 24 to May 16.

For ticket information, call 628-5661.

Professor Harold Hill will work his musical persuasions in the **FIRST THEATRE GUILD OF BIRMINGHAM** production of Meredith Wilson's "The Music Man" set to run

Nov. 14-15, 21-22 at the Knox Auditorium of the First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, 1669 W. Maple. The First Theatre Guild's selection for its traditional spring children's show will be announced later in the season.

RIDGEDALE PLAYERS' second production, the mystery thriller "Deathtrap," will run weekends Nov. 14-23 at the Ridgedale Players Playhouse on Long Lake Road near Livernois Road in Troy. "Company," Stephen Sondheim's Tony-Award-winning musical about a contemporary man weighing the advantages and disadvantages of marriage, is slated to run weekends Jan. 16 to Feb. 1.

Ridgedale Players will present Bernard Slade's "Tribute," a bitter-sweet comedy about a failing vaudeville actor's change of life. March 13-22, Ridgedale plans to close its season with the hilarious "You Can't Take It With You," by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman.

Please turn to next page

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COSTUME DESIGNER: JANE WATSON. MUSIC BY: JAMES NEWTON HOWARD. EDITOR: JANE WATSON. EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: JANE WATSON, JANE WATSON, JANE WATSON. PRODUCED BY: JANE WATSON, JANE WATSON, JANE WATSON. WRITTEN BY: JANE WATSON, JANE WATSON, JANE WATSON. DIRECTED BY: JANE WATSON, JANE WATSON, JANE WATSON.

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