

Theaters look to lively seasons

Continued from Preceding Page
The comedy about a thoroughly eccentric family in the 1930s will run weekends May 8-17.
For ticket information, call 542-0427.

ST. DUNSTAN'S GUILD OF CRANBROOK opens its season with "The Dining Room," a richly humorous play in which six actors and actresses play 58 different characters. "The Dining Room" will run weekends Friday, Oct. 24, to Saturday, Nov. 1, at St. Dunstan's Playhouse on Lone Pine Road between Cranbrook and Lahser roads.

St. D's very own musical revue, "Austreliet," scheduled to play weekends Feb. 6-14, will look at the folies of the '80s. Then Lanford Wilson's "Talley's Folly," a touching play about courtship, will run weekends April 9-11. "Talley's Folly" won both the Pulitzer Prize and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award.

St. Dunstan's will close its season with the exuberant musical "Oklahoma," by Rodgers and Hammerstein, which will be presented in the outside Greek Theatre on weekends from May 29 to June 6.

For ticket information, call 644-0527.

"Oliver," the musical by Lionel Bart, which is based on Dickens' "Oliver Twist," opens the TROY

PLAYERS season. "Oliver" plays weekends Nov. 7-23 at the Troy Community Center on Big Beaver Road near 476.
"All My Sons," Arthur Miller's drama about moral irresponsibility, will run weekends Jan. 16-31. Troy Players will stage Neil Simon's "Come Blow Your Horn," a comedy about a playboy bachelor whose younger brother moves in with him and cramps his style. "Horn" will play weekends March 27 to April 11.
For ticket information, call 879-1285.

In Wayne County, the **PLYMOUTH THEATRE GUILD** opens with Neil Simon's "Plaza Suite," three one acts about married life, which take place at different times in the same suite at the Plaza Hotel. "Plaza Suite" runs weekends Nov. 7-15 at the Plymouth Central Middle School on Main and Church streets in Plymouth.

When the glamorous leading lady is murdered at a community theater, "Murder Takes the Stage" weekends Jan. 30 to Feb. 7. Plymouth Theatre Guild's final show of the season will be Herb Gardner's "A Thousand Clowns," which will run weekends May 8-16. This heartwarming comedy tells of an unemployed comedy writer who tangles with a sociologist over the unconventional upbringing he's providing for his nephew.

Players' comedy lacks vitality

Performances of the Birmingham Village Players production of "The Butler Did It" by Walter and Peter Marks continue at 8:30 p.m. Friday-Saturday at the playhouse in Birmingham. For ticket information, call 644-2975.

While "The Butler Did It" contains a strong streak of irony, it scarcely lives up to its billing as a spoof of conventional whodunits.

As currently performed by the Birmingham Village Players, "Butler" has very few laughs and only mild suspense. There are a few momentary sparks, but the cast generally fails to ignite the audience's emotions.

"Butler" is a play within a play, as five actors and their domineering director attempt to stage the perfect whodunit. In the final days of rehearsal before their off-Broadway opening, director Anthony Lefcourt (Michael Block) is frustrated by stilted performances and a dearth of

publicity for the show.

THOUGH HE is sometimes not forceful enough as Lefcourt, Block does generally convey the director's obsessive drive for authenticity and the frenzied pressure he feels. Ironically, Block was the one with minor line problems at Saturday night's performance.

Jim Masters is far too lifeless as Robert, an aging has-been actor, and Raymond Butler, the character Robert plays. It strains credibility that an actor as bad as Robert would ever have been hired. Masters only fully comes alive when Robert tells off the actress who has been needing him.

Cara Bielski is satisfactory as the bitchy Natalie, trying to claw her way to a larger role in Lefcourt's play.

Carol Moritz overexaggerates the awkwardness of the ingenue Claudia playing Victoria Butler. She does have a convincing scream, and she draws genuine laughs miming Natalie's emotional tirade and jumping with gleeful abandon when Natalie gets told off.



Barbara Michals

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DON SCHORE'S great restraint is appropriate for his role of Aldo, the Butlers' butler, but not for the actor Michael, an unabashed ladies' man.

Bill Haycock is more credible as a phony police detective than he is as Sam, a vengeful potential murderer. Director Kim Cooke fails to have

his actors make sufficient distinction between playing bad actors and acting badly. Weak material further hampers Cooke's efforts.

Barbara Michals teaches high school English and journalism in Southfield. A theater critic for the last 12 years, she is an inveterate playgoer who regularly catches up on all the New York productions.

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