

# Singing star gets new look

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make-up out on the street during the day. I try to let my pores breathe. I'm from that old hippie school. I try to be as natural as I can."

Nichols said that as an actress and singer, she tends to be very dramatic in how she dresses and puts on her makeup. She thought the hair stylist and makeup experts were working to make her appear less severe.

(Kathy Doolittle Wudyka, the salon's style director, said, "We tapered her hair. She already had a nice, short haircut. We brightened her hair and makeup. I saw her perform at the Caucus Club. She had stage makeup — brownish lipstick, black eyebrows. I also would like to cut her hair once it grows put longer. I would like a little softer wisps around the face.") Nichols performs Tuesday-Sundays in the intimate atmosphere of Detroit's Caucus Club. "It's definitely the place to be seen in town," she said. Nichols enjoys the exposure, performing where "movers and shakers come in to hear me."

She recently sang in concert at the Birmingham Temple in Farmington Hills. "It's so much different than the club. It's nice to have people treat what I do like going to the theater," she said.

FOR BOTH her club and concert dates, she wears the same amount of makeup because "a lot of the concert sites are very intimate like the Caucus Club. When we do the Orchestra Hall engagement (a 2,000-seat venue as contrasted to the Birmingham Temple's few-hundred-seat auditorium), we're going to do everything about twice as much."

"I try to make everything bigger, grander," she said. Even so, she doesn't want to overdo. "I'm not a glamour girl up there... I like my personality to show through."

## Champagne — it's all in the style

By Elhel Simmons  
staff writer

Gourmet magazine Wine Editor Gerald Asher made it easy on the guests at a recent champagne and sparkling wine-tasting party at Cranbrook House in Bloomfield Hills.

"He kept his remarks down to just a few minutes and let the guests learn for themselves through the wines they tasted, without being overwhelmed by a lot of expert talk."

"What Asher did stress, briefly, is that, 'Every winemaker has his imprint.' What's best depends on what style you prefer. Sparkling wines are essentially a product of style."

"Each of three tables featured a champagne from France and an American sparkling wine (it can't really be called champagne if it's not from the Champagne Country of France) whose manufacture was supervised by the same maker."

THERE WAS Moët & Chandon Brut Imperial 1981 from Epernay, France, along with Domaine Chandon Napa Valley Brut from Yountville, Calif.; Piper-Heidsieck Brut 1979 from Reims, France; and Piper Sonoma Brut 1982 from Windsor,

One of Nichols' recent triumphs was portraying Edith Piaf, the French chanteuse, in "Piaf" at the Attic Theatre. "We didn't really try to make me look like Piaf," she said. "We lined my eyes and slanted my brows but did little to my hair. I wore barely any make-up."

The Orchestra Hall concert will consist of two 40-minute acts. "There will be a live taping of the audio," she said, "to be pressed into an album at a later date. The album will be called 'Sheri Nichols Live at Orchestra Hall.'"

"This is thrilling to me," she said. The concert also will be videotaped but in a casual way.

THE BENEFIT concert is "A Salute to Liberty," with Nichols singing the songs of great American composers such as Gershwin, Kern, Rodgers and Hammerstein, Rodgers and Hart, Porter, Arlen and Berlin.

"It's an immigrant theme," she said. "We also want to evoke a feeling of nostalgia, have people sit back and take a little ride in the richness of America when it was booming."

Tickets for the benefit concert are \$25, with sponsor seats at \$50. To reserve tickets, call the box office at 833-3700.

With Nichols at Orchestra Hall will be her accompanist, Richard Berent, who did all the arrangements for the songs. "He is quite gifted," she said.

Along with Berent on keyboards, the hand-picked musical group includes Motown musician Beans Bowles on reeds and Wayne State University students Chris Collins on reeds and flute, Kent Rogers, bass, and Dan Madanks on drums. Nichols said she first met Berent when she attended Wayne State University, where he was accompanist in the Dance Department and also was doing musicals. "He

has been with me almost exclusively for the last four years," she said.

NICHOLS IS known for her ballads and torch songs but also does jazz tunes. "I'm learning to be as much a jazz singer as a torch singer these days," she agrees with the Detroit newspaper critic who called her a chanteuse. "A chanteuse, to Americans today," she said, "is someone who's a dramatic singer, someone who acts a song."

With Nichols, the actress and singer are always very much together. It's harder for her to be a singer, however. "I really feel that I don't need to work as hard at being an actress as a singer," she said.

Nichols has been a veritable whirlwind as both actress and singer for the last two years. Since 1985 she has performed with Phil Marcus Esser of Livonia and Barbara Bredius of Troy in the revue "1946 Detroit, In 'Piaf' at the Attic." She also was in a one-woman show, "Sheri Nichols Downtown," which closed just before she began appearing at the Caucus Club in May.

"In between all that, I was working at the Gnome two days a week, plus doing 'The 1940s Radio Show' at the Attic." Her stint at the Gnome, across from Orchestra Hall, led indirectly to her engagement at Detroit's premier-acoustic hall. ("The acoustics at the Birmingham Temple are second to none — except second to Orchestra Hall," she said.)

She said two people from Orchestra Hall came to hear her at the Gnome and subsequently booked her for the hall date.

ASKED WHICH female singers she likes best, Nichols said, "One of my favorite vocalists is Sarah Vaughan." Regarding Barbara Streisand, who sang at the Caucus Club in the days before she

became a superstar, Nichols said, "I try not to copy her style." Another favorite: "I love Judy Garland."

"I listen to different singers for different reasons," she said. She listens to Vaughan for the technique, Garland for the drama, and Streisand because she's an actress.

Originally from Kalamazoo, Nichols arrived in Detroit in 1979. "I came with my husband, who is now my ex. He was in law school." Nichols attended Wayne State 1980-85 and received her bachelor of fine arts degree in the theater program.

She worked in the Hilberly Repertory Theatre Company's graduate program, as an undergraduate. But things got a little hectic, she said, and she left in 1985.

"I work like crazy. Since I left Wayne State, I have been able to do it without any problem at all," Nichols said. "I don't, like a lot of show people, have a day job."

A Detroit booster, she said, "I love Detroit. It's a good town for musicians to be in."



Kathy Doolittle Wudyka, style director at the Kazan salon, does Nichols' hair, which she has permed and colored, with highlights.

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