

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



Thursday, November 27, 1986 O&E

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Jeff Nahan, founder and executive director, conducts a class in Performing Dynamics at the Actors Alliance Conservatory of Theatre at the International School in Southfield.



Dr. Patricia Kihn provides input for students Terrence Haggerty of Royal Oak and Lisa Fisco of Farmington at class in Scene Studies.

Talent will out Developing acting skills

By Cathie Broidenbach
special writer

STUDENTS AREN'T TAUGHT acting at the Actors Alliance Conservatory of Theatre in Southfield.

"We can't teach anyone how to act," said Jeffrey Nahan, founder and executive director of the conservatory. "We give them the tools to find it within themselves."

How to project voice, move well on stage and prepare a scene or monologue are only a few of the many skills integrated into the program. Theoretical exercises help students break through barriers.

Nahan says many people are so self-aware when they first get up on stage that it blocks their progress. "So often people need permission to be," he said.

In his classes he gives that permission and tells students the class is like a padded cell where they won't get hurt if they let go and express themselves.

In addition to teaching fundamental theater skills, Nahan also announces upcoming auditions, recommends photographers for promo shots and discusses local talent agents, to give students practical information so that when they complete the program they're ready to go out and get work.

AS THE EDUCATIONAL arm of the Actors Alliance Theatre Company, the conservatory offers three levels of ongoing adult classes at the International School on 13 Mile and Evergreen roads. Also offered are Saturday classes for youth.

Nahan says within the three levels there is a place for anyone with an interest in the program. He personally places students to be certain the level of difficulty suits their abilities and experience.



Jay J. Levin of Birmingham and Gail Shiffman of Novi pretend to watch television, during "in the round." Students circle up, then take turns acting out their own impromptu skit.

Amateurs who want to explore possibilities and improve speaking skills enroll in the Exploratory Program. Performers preparing for careers in theater follow the Preparatory sequence of classes. The Conservatory series for the professional actor features weekend workshops and master classes by experts brought in from New York.

Six-week sessions begin periodically throughout the year, and classes meet evenings for 2½ to three hours once a week. The conservatory offers nine class experiences of gradually increasing challenge, on its Exploratory and Preparatory levels.

With the help of state Sen. Jack

Faxon and Helen Lanese, Nahan founded the Actors Alliance Theatre Company in 1981. He had done cafe repertory in Philadelphia, studied dance and street mime in New York and worked with the Detroit Repertory Theatre and the Attie Theatre in Detroit.

HE HOLDS a bachelor of arts in television and radio production, from Wayne State University and has 10 years experience teaching, acting and directing as well as running the business side of a theater.

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