

Fine performances pair with good play

Performances of "Speak No Evil" continue through Sunday, March 13, at Trinity House Theatre in Livonia. For ticket information, call the box office at 461-6302.

"Speak No Evil," an unpublished play by Susan Brown, is making its debut onstage at Trinity House Theatre in Livonia.

The intense drama is the first play written by Brown, an anonymous Michigan resident who writes under a pseudonym. Let's hope there are many more.

"Speak No Evil" takes an incisive look at a contemporary family dominated by an alcoholic husband and father, and the ways in which each member of the family is affected by that relationship.

As the play opens, the four grown children — Michael, Janet, Danny and Carol — are gathered together on the day of their father's funeral, joking, bickering, drinking and reminiscing about the old days. In the next but run-down house where they all grew up, they assemble around the TV set and a liquor cabinet.

DIRECTED BY Jeff Hedeon and Lee Peterman, the confident, carefully rehearsed cast is a joy to watch.

Christopher Howland, with his pleasant countenance and deft, clowish touch, is just right as Danny, who, as a clumsy child, was often ridiculed by his father and, who, as an adult, often deals with his memories of that time with his own caustic humor aimed at his dead father ("He should have been hung from the family tree").

As Michael, the older brother, Douglas John Spangler also turns in a fine performance. His Michael is as real as your wisecracking, next-door neighbor and, throughout the play, remains an empathetic character, despite the potential for violence which seems to lurk just beneath his attractive, comely surface.

The vivacious and animated Summer Walters is endearing as Janet,



Victoria Diaz

the sister who tries to escape the problems at home by immersing herself in schoolwork and popularity contests.

Younger sister, Carol (through whose eyes, in several flashbacks, we see the past), is played by Kristie Hase with touching vulnerability. She also displays an uncanny knack for seeming to physically transform her adult character into a confused, hurting child in just a moment's time, without benefit of costume or makeup change.

IN A SMALL role, Debra Jackson-Burns does a good job as the children's abused, terrorized mother, who manages to keep her dignity at all times, no matter what happens.

As John Smith, the tortured alcoholic, Jeff Hedeon completes the cast. His highly complex character, sometimes resembling a madman, is wonderfully realized here, seemingly consumed by a dark and terrible anger that often appears about to manifest itself, even when he is not drinking.

Through an intense drama, "Speak No Evil" contains many light moments. Actually, much of the play is laugh-out-loud funny. Brown has woven in the comic touches expertly, so they are a natural part of the fabric of the play and don't have the feel of something awkwardly tacked on.

The play is briskly paced, with no slack spots and no unnecessary overwrought scenes. The terrific dialogue simply crackles.

Considering its subject, the play could have fallen into that deadly trap of preachiness and self-righteousness, but it does not. Also, considering its subject, its characters could have been a gathering of tiresome

stereotypes, neatly divided into good guys and bad guys, and placed on a stage to deliver a "message" about the evils of alcoholism.

BUT THAT hasn't happened here at all. Brown's characters are wonderfully complex and three-dimensional, and, with their life and humanity, are the key to the success of this promising play.

Fault worth mentioning: a superfluous, out-of-place conclusion to the final scene. The audience already knows this "presence" exists with all members of the family — that's what the play has been about.

Above and beyond that, it simply does not fit here. It may look dramatic, but it seems more like something that's escaped a Stephen King horror film — not something which belongs in this intimate, human drama.

Victoria Diaz is a Livonia-based freelancer, who specializes in arts and entertainment articles in the metro area.

upcoming things to do

● **HANSEL & GRETEL**
Henry K. Martin presents the Children's Entertainment Company in "Hansel and Gretel," a theatrical presentation for children, at 9:30 and 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Thursday, March 3; 9:30 and 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Friday, March 4; 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Saturday, March 5, at the Community Arts Auditorium at the Michigan State Fairgrounds in Detroit. Tickets may be obtained beginning at 10 a.m. until 2 p.m., Monday, Feb. 29, at the auditorium box office. For more information or group sales, call 557-1228.

● **ICE CAPADES**
Ice Capades, appearing Tuesday-Sunday at Joe Louis Arena in Detroit, will conduct auditions for new cast members. Tryouts will be conducted by the Ice Capades performance director and coaching staff at the arena Friday, March 18, after the 7:30 p.m. show (about 10 p.m.). Prospective performers must be strong in basic jumps and spins and be trained in figure and freestyle skating. Minimum age for cast members is 18, although talented skaters who are 17 may try out if accompanied by a parent or guardian. For more information, call 567-6000.

● **VIENNA CHOIR**
The Vienna Choir boys will appear for one performance only 8 p.m. Friday, March 4, at the Music Hall Center in Detroit. Tickets are priced \$18-\$14. Tickets may be purchased

through Music Hall Box Office or at any Ticketmaster outlet including Hudson's and AAA. The Music Hall box office is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday, and noon to 5 p.m. Saturdays. For more information, call the box office at 963-7680. Special group rates and dinner theater packages may be arranged by calling 963-7622.

● **DIA SHOW**
The film "Frida: Natureza Viva" is scheduled for 3 p.m. Sunday, March 6, at the Detroit Institute of Arts. This 1984 made-in-Mexico color film is the story of Frida Kahlo, Mexican artist, political activist and feminist. General admission is \$2 at the door of the Lecture/Recital Hall.

● **SWEET ADELINES**
Spirit of Detroit Chapter of Sweet Adelines Inc. will present "Cruise with Spirit," a show with Region No. 2's Silver Medal Chorus and special guest Ambiance at 8 p.m. Friday, March 11, and Saturday, March 12, at the Clarenceville High School Auditorium in Livonia. For ticket information, call 671-0489.

● **JAZZ BAND**
Doc Alexander's New Orleans Dance and Jazz Band plays from 8:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. Friday-Saturday at Bobby's Country House in Livonia. The band offers dance music, and traditional New Orleans jazz for listening.

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