



LAURA VARGA/staff photographer

Birmingham Village Players' presentation of "Hansel and Gretel" is among the area's summer theater offerings. Many groups stage presentations which appeal to the entire family during the summer. Here Karl Sterns, 22 (left)

of West Bloomfield rehearses her role as Gretel with Laurie Shea, who plays the witch in the gingerbread house. She, 22 is a Bloomfield Hills resident.

Summer's stages sizzle with action

By Helen Zucker
special writer

Neither sun nor lack of rain nor soaring temperatures can keep Oakland County's theater groups from their appointed rounds.

These ambitious actors and technicians have spent the spring and summer mounting full-scale productions of children's theater, serious plays and musicals. The fruits of their labors are now in and the harvest is abundant for families, students and just about everyone in town.

COMING UP: Henrik Ibsen's "Ghosts," at the Avon Playhouse, 1185 Washington Road, Rochester. The two-week run begins July 22-24, and continues through July 25-27. Curtain is at 8 p.m.; matinees at 2 p.m. Sunday.

Dorothy Smith, a longtime member of the Avon Players, produces and directs "Ghosts," as part of the requirements for her master's degree in theater from Wayne State University. Smith uses Arthur Kopit's contemporary translation of Ibsen's 1881 classic. She's brought in Mary Copenhagen of the Hilberry Theatre to do costumes. Mark Berg of the Birmingham Theatre will do lighting.

Smith feels that Ibsen's play is timeless. It's about "being true to yourself; it's about taking risks rather than letting others dictate how we live," she said.

Her cast includes Sheila Lyle as Mrs. Alving, Tom Logan as Pastor Manders, David Nelson as Oswald, Kathy Wyszacki as Regina, and Frank Cosenza as Engstrand. For ticket information, call 375-9432.

THE BIRMINGHAM VILLAGE PLAYERS reinstated children's theater and plans to continue the tradition. Bill Haycock and the board decided on "Hansel and Gretel" as the first offering in five years. Producer Diane McKoon, director Jane Miller, Kim Fox as Hansel and Keri Stern as Gretel open at 8:30 a.m. and 3 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 6. There will be two performances on Saturday, Aug. 13, at the playhouse, 752 Chestnut, Birmingham. Parents and grandparents are welcome. For ticket information, call 644-2075.

The playhouse is in the first act of a huge renovation effort directed by builder Tom Fallos of Troy. Fred

Lavery and the board are overseeing the long range project. For information about obtaining \$3 tickets for the building benefit, call Donna Masters at 644-2075.

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER offers something for those going away in August. Take the kids to see "Hansel and Gretel" July 26 at the Jewish Community Center. Four weeks of interactive theater meant to involve kids at an early age kicks off with this favorite tale.

Sponsored by the center's cultural arts department, this is the third year of "family nights." Dad is encouraged to sit on the floor with kids age 4-11. Everyone's encouraged to speak to the actors.

Henry K. Martin is directing "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" on Aug. 8 and 9. "Beauty & The Beast" on Aug. 16 and 23. Martin and his wife, Sue, and the cast want to introduce kids to the delights of theater going at an early age. They hope to cultivate a lifelong habit. All performances are at 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays in DeRoy Auditorium, 6600 W. Maple, West Bloomfield. For tickets, call 661-1000, or turn up at the information booth in the lobby 1½ hour before curtain time.

TROY PLAYERS attempts an ambitious schedule. They hope a summer production will become a permanent part of four offerings a year. Director Stephen Kiersey has lucked into a sprightly cast to do one of New York's oldest running shows, "The Fantasticks." Tom Jones' witty patter and songs will open Aug. 5, and run through Aug. 6, 12-13, 20-21. Jim Talbot, Pat and Colleen O'Shaughnessy, Hal D'Artini, Robert Szatkowski make up the cast. Kiersey gets into the act as one of the fathers. Greg Nichols on piano and Connie Patrick, a jack-of-all-trades, are on hand. Curtain time is 8 p.m. at the Troy Community Center. For ticket information, call 879-1285.

STAGECRAFTERS' YOUTH THEATRE rounded up 47 cast members and 30 technicians, ages 8-17, from every part of Oakland County to put on a fulsome production of "Alice in Wonderland."

Cast and crew alike are qualified and enthusiastic. Director Carol McFarland has a master's degree in theater from Wayne. Producer Maureen Burns "likes to keep things on the burner year round." Everyone is working on a volunteer basis. Billie

Wildrick, seen in the Great Lakes production of "Anne," will play Alice. Christopher Pauck is the actor behind the Cheshire Cat's grin. Debra Hayes will be the Queen and Jim Daly runs about as the White Rabbit.

This carefully mounted production will open 7 p.m. Friday, July 29. Performances continue at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Saturday, July 30, and at 2 p.m. Sunday, July 31. Tickets are \$2, seating is assigned. Ticket sales are already under way. For information, call the Baldwin Theatre, 415 S. Lafayette, Royal Oak, 541-6430.

THE SPOTLIGHT PLAYERS present "Cupid's Bow," "The Middle Kingdom" and "Lemonade," on Friday-Saturday, July 29-30. The three one-act plays are "summer fare," meant to send you and your date out on a quest for root beer floats and sweet old-time pleasures. "A Night of One Act" can be seen at 8 p.m. in St. John's Episcopal Church, 555 S. Wayne Road, Westland. Tickets, \$4; students and seniors, \$3. Call 459-7672 for information.

AT MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL, Oakland University, Rodgers and Hammerstein's strange, wonderful love story about a handsome carnival barker and a beautiful factory worker wraps up a fine season.

"Carousel" takes us to the coast of Maine in 1873. The show's unforgettable songs "If I Loved You," "June Is Bustin' Out All Over," "You'll Never Walk Alone" will take many people back to music we've all grown up with.

Meadow Brook imported the Municipal Opera of St. Louis for the production. The terrific, nationally known cast includes Patrice Munsell as Nellie, Rex Smith as Billy Bigelow, the barker, and Stephanie Zimbalist as Julie Jordan, the girl involved with clambakes and hapless love.

The musical opens the day after Labor Day for a six-day run at Baldwin Pavilion on the Oakland University campus. Assistant director Greg Bloomfield wants season subscribers to the Meadow Brook Theatre to know that "Carousel" is a bonus production, a ninth play added to the eight done each season. Matinees at 2 p.m. Aug. 7 and 10. Curtain time, 8 p.m. Sept. 6-11. For tickets and further information, call 377-2010.

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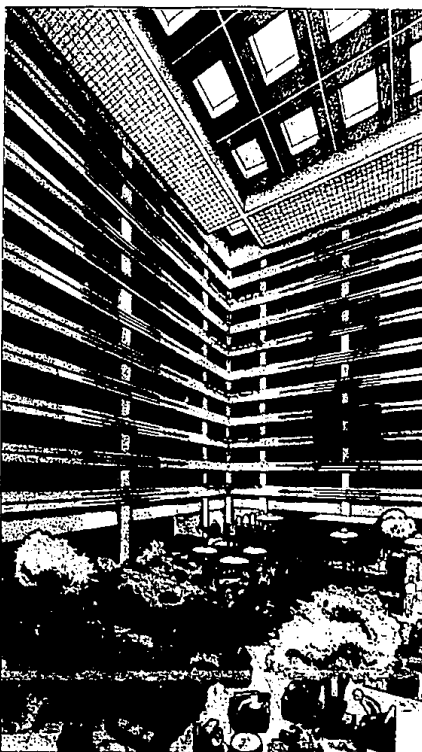
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