

## Here's what's coming up for children at museum

The Youththeatre specifies what age group each show is designed to please. Shows billed Wiggle Club are specially designed to hold the attention of 3-5-year-olds. Older children and adults are welcome to attend all shows but the Wiggle Club set is permitted to attend only shows designed for the very young.

"We enforce age restrictions, much to the chagrin of some parents, but we want young people to enjoy the show and want to come back," Youththeatre curator Mickey Miners said. "We could make more money if we let anyone in, but we want it to be a positive experience."

For almost 24 years, the Youththeatre under the direction of Miners has been bringing to Detroit the best in family entertainment from all over the United States, Canada and the world, adding variety to the shows

produced by the Youththeatre's own professional company, the Prince Street Players.

**KICKING OFF** the holiday season Saturday, "Eric Nagler's Holiday Hoopla" features live swing-bounce-clap music for the Wiggle Club and the entire family.

Saturday, Dec. 10, large rod-puppets bring Clara, the Mouse King and the Sugar Plum Fairy to dance Tchaikovsky's "The Nutcracker" in a show for ages 5 and older.

After the downtown Hudson's store closed, Santa moved his official Detroit residence to the Detroit Institute of Arts. Children and their parents can have "Breakfast with Santa" in the Kresge Court of the DIA at 9:30 a.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays. Breakfast with the season's important celebrity costs \$5 per person and requires reservations.

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After breakfast, children and their parents receive a booklet inviting them to take a "Holiday Art Adventure," a self-guided treasure hunt through the museum's galleries. This year, Santa's helpers will be dressed as characters from "Alice in Wonderland," the new musical by the Youththeatre's own Prince Street Players.

"Alice in Wonderland," a musical for the Wiggle Club and the entire family, runs Tuesday-Saturday, Dec. 27-31.

Coming in January — Amelia Bedelia on Jan. 14, a marionette show about Cinderella on Jan. 21, and "How Computers Rock and Roll" on Jan. 28. For tickets and information, call 832-2370.

## Esser's new show worth strutting about

Performances of the new production of "Somerset Strutt," a musical revue, continue Friday-Saturday evenings at Somerset Mall in Troy. The show is preceded by dinner at Sebastian's. For reservations, call 649-6625.

By Helen Zucker  
special writer

Phil Marcus Esser's "Somerset Strutt" is a sophisticated, powerful, beautifully crafted, surprising blend of songs. Esser's new musical revue follows dinner at Sebastian's Restaurant in Somerset Mall, and the excellent dinner is as beautifully executed as the show.

Voices like Esser's, Barbara Bredius and Charlie Lattimer's come along all too rarely. In the downstairs theater at the mall, diners were seated at reserved tables, and drinks were on hand when the lights went out, and suddenly the three singers were out in the audience doing a raucous rendition of "You're the Top."

Esser has rewritten the lyrics — using local references — several times. This time around, his references are more amusing than ever. Then the show moved onto the stage, where, in this reviewer's opinion, the extensive wine list and the menu.

In a tux, Esser did a rich, romantic version of "I Concentrate on You." Then, in a display of the tremendous range Esser, Bredius and Lattimer have, the threesome moved into Bredius' "Brussels" and went on to do numbers as diverse as Elton John's "I Guess That's Why They Call It the Blues" and Bob Dylan's "Shelter from the Storm."

BREDIUS, A powerhouse of talent, came out in black silk and knocked everyone's socks off singing Judith Viorst's monologue, "Leave You." Bredius has terrific timing as well as wit. There probably isn't anything she can't sing. In the course of the evening, she gets a chance to move from "At the End of the Day" (from "Les Miserables") to Willie

Nelson's "You Were Always on My Mind."

Lattimer, a gentler talent, who moves with great ease, did a moving rendition of John Lennon's "Imagine" and was amusing in his doo-wap numbers with Bredius.

But it's Esser, with or without his guitar, who lowers over the evening. He moves from ballads to country western, from "Your Secrets Are Safe," a moving, original song written by Esser, to Webber's "Starlight Express" and Dylan's "Sweetheart," the centerpiece of the show.

Esser doesn't need anything but the bare stage. He has enormous control, a great voice and presence. Real talent that he is, he seems to be holding back reserves he could pull out at a moment's notice.

Bob Foster and Barbara Carbury do wonders on the keyboard. Paul Perich, percussionist, manages unusual sound effects in a show that is structured to surprise the listener. Susan and Eric Esser do lights in the right places against the silver and red backdrop.

LOTS OF expertise and lots of care have gone into the Maxfield Parrish ambience at Sebastian's. It shows in the overhead lights that look like pink seashells, the spotless white linen tablecloths and napery, the extensive wine list and the menu.

A bread basket filled with warm cinnamon rounds, flaky stollen, miniature croissants, pumpernickel made by a baker who understands real pumpernickel — in short, the best bread basket in town — appeared out of nowhere, along with water glasses that were always filled, long-stemmed wine glasses, real flowers and an experienced waiter named Mick.

Sensing that I was hesitating between the five delectable choices on the dinner theater menu, Mick unhesitatingly recommended sauteed Lake Michigan Perch to me and the Beef Wellington to my dining partner.

The fresh perch, on an oversized platter, came with herbed butter, exquisite dauphine potatoes, crunchy vegetables and a salad with an apple vinaigrette dressing that seemed made of air. The Beef Wellington was, as an aunt of mine used to say, "like butter." The crust was flaky, and a hearty red wine sauce added zing.

Creme Brulee with perfectly crystallized glaze arrived after coffee. While we ate, Marty Collins played effortless piano. Couples got up and danced. Women wearing hats out of "The Great Gatsby" and busboys carrying platters and brushing crumbs away between courses while Collins sang a bit added to the heady air.

Helen Zucker has many years' experience reviewing for newspapers and magazines in Michigan, New York and Massachusetts.

## table talk

### Tasting bubbly

After sipping and sampling French champagnes, guests at the recent third annual champagne tasting hosted by Gourmet Magazine, heard comments from Gerald Asher, the magazine's wine editor.

"Each champagne has its own particular melody but each year they change key," Asher told the assembled guests. Six champagnes were tasted: both the 1979 and 1982 vintages of Bollinger, Champagne Deutz and Perrier-Jouet.

What distinguishes Bollinger is its "heavy style," Asher said. Deutz has

"a very rich texture," while Perrier-Jouet is "a much more delicate style of champagne."

Asher, as well as Gourmet publisher Richard B. Barthelme, were among representatives from Gourmet who welcomed guests from the local advertising community to the event at Cranbrook House in Bloomfield Hills.

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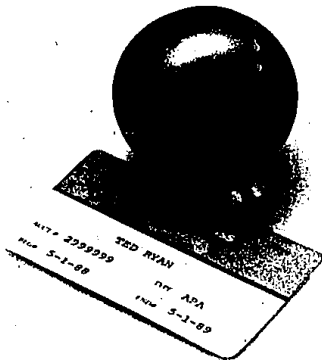
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DINING & ENTERTAINMENT

# On the Town

## Save Some Of The Oohs And Ahhs For Later.



If you're looking for a holiday gift that will last all year long, an Annual Pass to Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village is just the ticket. Look at all the enjoyment you can give, for only \$20.

And what better season to start using the pass? Our very popular Christmas in Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village continues through January 1. Meanwhile, a new exhibit, *Susan McCord's Quilts: A Farmwife's Legacy*, showcases one of the nation's finest quilt collections. And anyone will enjoy the *Streamlining America* and *The Automobile in American Life* exhibits.

The Annual Pass will do more than surprise someone on Christmas Day—it will delight someone throughout the year. It's the perfect gift for everyone on your list. Order yours by calling 271-9363 (or 271-1620 for general information) and watch the oohs and aahs roll in all year long.

- Don't Miss:**
- Henry Ford Museum Live: Popular Dance in America weekend January 21-22
  - Focus on Black History February 4-5
  - Henry Ford Museum Live: American Piano Music weekend February 18-19

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### good tastes

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