



Avon Players rehearses for its production of "Brighton Beach Memoirs." The cast includes Lesley Berns of Troy as Nora (left), Priscilla Bo-

gert of Rochester as Blanche, Elyse Fischer of Birmingham as Laurie and Jackie Sitek of Rochester as Kate.

upcoming things to do

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mission, call the Palace box office at 377-8800.

COMEDY THRILLER

Grosse Pointe Theatre's first production of 1989 will be comedy thriller "Fatal Attraction" by Bernard Slade, from Wednesday, Jan. 18, to Saturday, Jan. 28, at the Grosse Pointe War Memorial in Grosse Pointe Farms. For ticket information, call 881-4004.

'SPECTRUM' DEBUTS

Michigan's cultural and artistic life will be celebrated in a new public television series, "Spectrum," debuting at 7 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 15, on WTVS, Channel 56. A production of Michigan Public Broadcasting, with

support from the Michigan Council for the Arts, "Spectrum" is a showcase of the arts with segments produced or acquired by the seven Michigan public TV stations. The series is hosted by veteran actor, broadcaster, teacher and writer Paul Winter. "Spectrum" is currently scheduled to air as monthly specials in January, February and March.

BAND REPORTING

The Kinsey Report, featuring Big Daddy Kinsey, will bring its brave new blues sound to Sully's in Dearborn on Thursday, Jan. 12. The band's contemporary sound draws from the diverse musical backgrounds of its members, mixing roots and electric blues with modern funk and reggae rhythms. Show-

times are 10 p.m. and midnight. Cover is \$6. For more information, call 846-5377.

PLAY ARRIVING

"In the Traffic of a Targeted City," a play by Marc Kaminsky, will be presented at the 1515 Broadway Theater at 5 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 5. Combining music, poetry and drama, this play is designed to bring audiences closer to the reality of these nuclear times by interweaving the lives of four characters: two living in New York today and two living in Hiroshima in 1945. Ticket price is \$15. Proceeds go to benefit the Detroit area SANE/FREEZE. For more information, and to order tickets, call Mary Diskin at 546-3920.



Cathie Breidenbach

Lively cast captures mood of a typical Simon comedy

Performances of the Meadow Brook Theatre production of "I Ought To Be In Pictures" continue through Sunday, Jan. 29, on the Oakland University campus in Rochester Hills. For ticket information, call 377-3300.

Meadow Brook Theatre's chipper production of Neil Simon's "I Ought To Be In Pictures" revolves around three quirky, verbal characters expertly played by James Anthony, Traci Lyn Thomas and Nancy Linehan. A slovenly screenwriter and runaway father, Herb Tucker (James Anthony) suffers from writer's block and chronic irresponsibility. Despite his slapdash housekeeping and irresponsible ways, the guy comes off as a likable fellow — perhaps because he doesn't hide his foibles, his feelings, or the stacks of unwashed dishes cluttering his kitchen.

Traci Lyn Thomas plays Libby, his 19-year-old daughter who hitchhikes from New York to California to find her long-lost father. With her raspy, real-person voice and tattered cut-off jeans, Libby teeters between being an assertive, capable woman and a confused teenager in need of the daddy who walked out when she was 3 years old.

Except for a little residual guilt, Herb lives unburdened by the responsibilities of fatherhood. The cad

can't even remember his son's name. Then Libby bursts unexpectedly into his life and makes him face up to being a father.

NANCY LINEHAN plays Herb's bright and tolerant girlfriend, Steffy. Because he is afraid of commitment, he treats Steffy hardly any better than he has treated his children. Herb gets off easy, perhaps too easy, in the hands of these two women not inclined to hold grudges. Libby, a whirlwind of energetic competence, takes charge of his life. She rebuilds his car engine and cleans up his chaotic house.

It may be a cliché to have a woman invade a man's disheveled space and turn it overnight into the epitome of domestic order. Libby replaces scummy dishes on the table with flowers and makes the every-which-way books in the bookcase stand at orderly attention.

Set designer Peter Hicks must have taken perverse pleasure cluttering up Herb's place, then in Act II bringing order to the chaos. Cliche or not, there's satisfaction in the metamorphosis, and the audience knows, even if Herb doesn't, that shaping him up is next on Libby's daughterly agenda.

"I Ought To Be In Pictures" takes place in Hollywood, and playwright Simon sprinkles some good gags

about California lifestyle atop his standard New York repertoire, but he can't hide the fact that beneath the California alfalfa sprout garnish, "I Ought To Be In Pictures" like all his plays, remains anchored in his native New York.

Like garlic in a good kosher dill, New York accents and the hang-ups of New Yorkers flavor all Simon's plays, no matter where he sets them. After all, both Herb and Libby hail from that fabled town, and Libby lays on a convincing Brooklyn accent lest we temporarily forget.

THE INEVITABLE New York humor and the familiar flippancy repartee of Simon's ever-so-clever characters makes for comfortable theater, but monotony threatens when year after year theaters all over town present yet another play from Simon's prolific repertoire.

In opting to produce a tried-and-true Simon play, Meadow Brook artistic director Terence Kilburn may be accused of being overly cautious, but his able direction of "I Ought To Be In Pictures" successfully brings the old comic standby to fresh life.

Cathie Breidenbach of West Bloomfield teaches college writing classes and works as a freelance writer.

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