

# 'Madame Cadillac' celebrates women colonists



TOM ARNETT/staff photographer

Elizabeth Hanson alias Madame Cadillac and Harriet Berg, artistic director of "First Lady of Detroit", rehearse lines for the dance-drama that premieres Saturday, March 18, at Oakland Community College's Womencenter Dinner Theater. Berg reconstructed Madame Cadillac's life through documents.

By Susan Buck  
staff writer

Marie-Therese Guyon Cadillac lived two centuries ago but her hectic lifestyle rivaled anything a well-organized woman of the 1980s can accomplish.

Coined the First Lady of Detroit, Cadillac gave birth to 13 children while building a farm, suffering pirate raids and conducting the fur trade for her explorer-soldier husband, Antoine Laumet de la Mothe Cadillac.

Her life story depicted in a dance-drama premieres at Oakland Community College Womencenter's annual International Women's Day Dinner Theater. The event is set for 6:30 p.m., Saturday, March 18, in Room 308, Building J, on the Orchard Ridge campus, Farmington Hills.

A celebration of Women's History Month, the program begins with an international meal prepared and donated by Womencenter volunteer culinary experts.

IN THE often neglected French colonial history of the Great Lakes Region, dominated by wars and conflicts of great empires, women's roles have been relegated to footnotes.

"She was a very unusual woman," said Harriet Berg, artistic director of

the Madame Cadillac Dancers & Musicians of Detroit. The company is in residence at the International Institute of Detroit.

"She was the first French woman to come into what was known then as the Northwest Territory. No other French woman would come because the area was considered too wild," Berg said.

Women of the time shared with men the dangers and hardships of creating a new civilization out of the wilderness.

"First Lady of Detroit" traces the life of Madame Cadillac from the Ursuline convent in Quebec, where she was educated, to the 750-mile trip in an open canoe from Montreal to the trading post of Fort Pontchartrain du Detroit.

The play incorporates authentic music, dances and costumes of the period. It's presented by the Madame Cadillac Company of Detroit which was founded in 1982 under a grant from the Michigan Council for the Arts. The script was written by Ron Martell, associate director of the Attic Theater.

Berg, a Detroit resident, reconstructed the life of Madame Cadillac through the work of Mary Catherine Crowley, a turn-of-the-century novelist from Detroit.

DURING BERG'S research in dance reconstruction, which was

funded in 1981 by a grant from the Michigan Council for the Arts, Berg learned of Madame Cadillac's story.

"This was a piece of history that not many people knew about Detroit," said Berg.

During Berg's research, she discovered the existence of a bronze plaque created by Carolus Romanelli for the 200th anniversary of Madame Cadillac's arrival in Detroit.

Previously housed at the Detroit Historical Museum, the plaque now hangs in the Cadillac station at the Detroit People Mover. She also obtained copies of Madame Cadillac's birth certificate.

Berg visited the French convent where Cadillac was educated, as well.

Tickets are on a first come basis and must be paid for in advance. Reserved tables aren't available. Ticket prices for dinner and theater, which begins at 6:30 p.m. are \$15 general public, \$13 students and seniors. For tickets to theater and dessert only, beginning at 8 p.m., cost is \$8 general public, \$7 students and seniors.

For more information, call the Womencenter at 471-7602.

## It's art for animals' sakes Managing diabetes

Children and teens are invited to create a poster for the Michigan Humane Society's be kind to animals week May 7-13. Posters should illustrate the contest's theme, acts of kindness toward animals.

Winning posters will be displayed during the society's annual meeting beginning at 7 p.m. Saturday, May 13, in the Hyatt Regency, Dearborn. Posters will be judged in four categories — grades K-3, 4-6, 7-9 and 10-12. Each entry must be the youngster's original work and must be received by May 1. Entries won't be returned.

All work should be at least 22

inches by 28 inches and no larger than 24 inches by 36 inches. Photographs won't be accepted.

The child's name, age, address, phone number should be on the back of each poster. The name of the child's school, its address and phone number must be noted on the back as well.

Entries should be sent to the Humane Society, 7401 Chrysler Drive, Detroit 48211.

Art directors and graphic designers from local advertising agencies will judge the entries.

For details, call the 872-3400. Ext. 313.

Managing diabetes will be the focus of a day long conference from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, March 18, in the Michigan Inn, 16400 J.L. Hudson Drive, Southfield.

Cosponsored by Harper-Grace Hospitals and the American Diabetes Association the conference offers information designed to reduce the chances for diabetes related illness. Diabetes experts present hints about caring for feet and eyes, adjusting insulin doses with your doctor's help and improving your diet. The seminar will cover specific

health issues affecting diabetic men and women.

June Biermann and Barbara Tooley, authors of seven books on diabetes and directors of the Sugar Free Centers in California discuss strategies for reducing stress.

Guided tours of displays and exhibits will be available. A lunch, appropriate for diabetic persons will be served.

The program costs \$20 per person. For registration and details call the department of community health programming at Harper-Grace Hospitals, 745-8983.

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