

Henry II's family problems are delicious fun

Performances of "The Lion in Winter," presented by the St. Dunstan's Guild of Cranbrook, continue through Saturday, April 15, at the guild playhouse in Bloomfield Hills. For ticket information call 644-0527.

By Mark S. Carley
special writer

The St. Dunstan's Guild production of James Goldman's "The Lion in Winter" provides a delicious evening of scheming, treachery and backstabbing fun.

This medieval tale of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine combines the savage wit of "Dangerous Liaisons" with the tragic betrayals and misjudgments of "King Lear" and the sardonic sleaziness of "Dallas." How could one not have a good time?

So, you think you've got family problems? Pity poor Henry, played here by Robert Marotta. His wife, though under house arrest, constantly plots to rob him of his kingdom and to win her freedom. His three sons, all hopelessly ill-suited for rule, eagerly hatch schemes to steal the crown from one another.

strong, yet tired king. His forceful presence commands respect from his sons and the audience, if not from his wife.

Eleanor, played by Lee Rosender, is witty and charming, but also very pretty. While Henry frets about a stable kingdom and lasting peace, Eleanor is concerned with avenging her imprisonment and taking the throne for her favorite son.

AS ELEANOR, Rosender is magnificent. She anchors the play, commanding attention whenever she is on stage. Her complicated and subtle character is played with complete understanding. She is hateable for her duplicities and admirable for her courage, grace and charm. A 12th century feminist role model, Eleanor accepts the lot given her by a man's world but molds it to suit her needs.

Henry's three sons provide a fascinating study in personality disorders. Richard, the eldest, is an ambitious and aggressive soldier. He is also a bully with a dark secret. David Butler plays the part with intimidating effectiveness.

Michael J. Gordon is the second son, Geoffrey, frustrated by the po-



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tential of a brilliant mind and the practical inability to execute his will. His lack of courage and common sense keep him from the throne and his father's favor.

The youngest son, John, is a silly,

sadistic and emotionally disturbed teenager. Patrick Brooks shows excellent potential for further psycho roles in his portrayal of John.

The cast is nicely rounded out by Melissa Malcolm-Butler as Princess

Alais (Henry's mistress) and by Jack Brutell as Phillip, King of France.

MOODS IN THE PLAY range from bilingually funny to intensely dramatic. The cast is at its best when the emotions are at their highest levels.

Both sets and costumes also deserve high commendations. Costumes (by Rox Basheerian and Nancy Gibbs) are colorful and very suggestive of medieval splendor.

Especially high praise goes to set designer Bob Ralsch. His two move-

able arched castle walls combine with a few tapestries, flats and set pieces to create at least eight different scenes of cold, dank authenticity.

Director Isabel Hinkelbach and producer Barbara Gowans' job is well done

Mark Carley is active in local community theater, both on stage and behind the scenes. He is a member of Ridgedale Players. A resident of Ferndale, he works as a loan officer for the Detroit Economic Growth Corp.

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FOLK CONCERTS

Folk musician Neil Woodward appears at 7 p.m. Friday, April 14, at the Palat Creek Center for the Arts in Rochester. His performance is the third of six folk concerts in the center's 1989 Coffeehouse series. For more information call 651-4110.

BLUE RIBBON

The Great Lakes Chapter Sweet Adelines Chorus and quartets from the chapter will perform in a free concert at 5 p.m. Sunday, April 16, at Somerset Mall in Troy. The chorus and also the quartet Sounds Unlimited, which will be performing, both were blue ribbon winners in the recent district competition in Flint. For information about joining the chapter call Martha Quinn at 544-8875.

COFFEE HOUSE

Rich and Maureen Del Grosso perform in a special benefit concert for the Upland Hills Coffee House Series at 8 p.m. Saturday, April 15, at Upland Hills Farm in Oxford. Garnet Rogers is the attraction at 8 p.m. Thursday, April 13. Rogers requests that all concertgoers bring a nonperishable food item, which will be donated to the Baldwin Shelter. Tickets to each concert are \$7. For more information call 628-1611 or 625-1227.

READERS THEATER

Second performance in the spring series of Readers Theater will be held at 4 p.m. Sunday, April 16, at the DeRoy Studio Theater at the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield. A complimentary pre-theater wine bar will begin at 3:15 p.m. Tickets are available at the door beginning at 3:15 p.m. the day of the performance. There is admission charge. For further information call Readers Theater at 967-4030.

COMICS, CARDS

The X-tra-va-Con Comic Book and Baseball Card Show will be held from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Sunday, April 16, at the American Legion Hall in Farmington Hills. Admission is \$1.50. For information 24 hours call 350-2633.

NIGHT SOCIETY

The City of Southfield will present the Night Society Orchestra, a 10-piece band whose home base is Bay City, on its Concerts-in-the Garden series Sunday, April 16, at the Michigan Inn. Concert and full brunch catered by the hotel are \$9; concert and coffee, \$3.50. Brunch is served at 11 a.m., and the concert and dancing starts at 11:30 a.m. For reservations and information call 354-4717.

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