

upcoming things to do

• 'BEAU JEST'

The Birmingham Theatre will present "Beau Jest" by James Sherman, opening at five-week engagement Tuesday, Nov. 13. Performances continue through Sunday, Dec. 16. The comedy reflects family dynamics when the thirtyish daughter's new boyfriend enters the picture. Ticket prices, depending upon performance, range from \$14-\$25. For ticket information call the box office at 644-3533.

• CABARET CONCERT

Actors Alliance Theatre Company will spoof the Southfield Symphony with scary tales, classic poems and witches' brew throughout the musical selections to be presented at 3 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 28, at the Southfield Civic Center Pavilion. The acting ensemble, dressed in full Halloween attire, will set the mood for the "Devils, Goblins and Halloween" Cabaret Concert. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$7 for seniors and students. For information and reservations call Cultural Arts at 354-4717.

• 'THE NERD'

The Smith Theatre Guild opens the 1990-91 season with a production of Larry Shue's "The Nerd." The comedy will be presented at 8 p.m. Thurs-

day-Saturday, Oct. 25-27, at the Wallace F. Smith Theatre at Oakland Community College-Orchard Ridge Campus in Farmington Hills. Tickets are \$8 for adults and \$4 for students and seniors. For further information or to order tickets call 471-7700.

• READERS THEATER

Short stories read by professional actors will be brought to life at Readers Theater at 3:30 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 28, in the DeRoy Theatre at the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield. A complimentary wine bar will open at 3 p.m. The program features Shirley Benay, Evelyn Orbach, Rube Weiss and Paul Winter. Melba Winer will serve as the host of the performance. Tickets are available at the door beginning at 3 p.m. There is an admission charge. For further information call Readers Theater at 967-4030.

• 'GOD'S FAVORITE'

The Woods Players will present the comedy, "God's Favorite," by Neil Simon at 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, Nov. 9-10, 16-17, in the main auditorium of Oakland Community College's Royal Oak Campus. Tickets are \$5.50 (\$4.50 for seniors and students). For information call 471-7700.

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Big musical requires lots of effort

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AUDITIONS ARE open in Bloomfield Players productions, although the group strives to involve those in the Bloomfield Hills School District whenever possible. Marie Montross applauds the open auditions decision. "We want to encourage the Bloomfield people, but if you close casting, you miss some great talent and the spark that comes with it. Open casting keeps it fresh, keeps it from becoming a stale group. This is the best of all worlds."

"We don't want to be elitist," says Hamilton, "so everyone can audition, but we want quality. I think we can be comparable to Stagers and the (Birmingham) Village Players."

The new community theater group was launched last winter by a citizens advisory commission of the Bloomfield Hills Schools. Its January production of "The Music Man" starred local dentist Dr. Larry Miller as Harold Hill, and was well attended. Many who played in "The Music Man" have returned to be cast in "Dolly" including Becky McIntyre who plays the lead role of Dolly Levin.

The lineup of past and future shows attests to the popularity of musicals with audiences of all ages. Last winter the Bloomfield Players brought "The Music Man" to town; Dolly, the matchmaker, takes center

stage this fall, and "South Pacific" and "Fiddler on the Roof" are the two shows for next year. The council points out that all future productions need not be musicals.

Hamilton says they chose to launch the new theater group with upbeat shows likely to bring box office success. "We wanted crowd pleasers although they're more expensive to produce because of royalties. People like musicals."

THE NEW volunteer group is working to build a reputation and sell enough tickets to cover production costs. "Our objective is to break even," says Hamilton, but for the first couple of years Bloomfield Schools plans to subsidize the group by offering a stipend to the producer, the director, the orchestra conductor and the vocal director. "Hopefully that won't continue after we develop our own cadre of people," she says.

Executive producer Hamilton hires the artistic and management people from resumes and interviews. Once she hires the staff, she lets them handle the creative decisions of putting on a show and stays only peripherally involved in productions.

Seed money for the new group comes from the Bloomfield Hills millage which voters renewed last June. "We want to offer both passive and active reaction options," Hamil-

ton explains. Nobody implies that the rigors of acting or building sets is passive, but compared to running around sports like soccer, a broader segment of the community can take part in a musical production than can play in youth sports.

The citizens advisory commission wanted to diversify offerings of the Recreation and Community Services Division in part because, "Most residents don't have children in schools," Hamilton says that they wanted programs supported by millage money to address the needs of the whole population of the district.

The commission focused on theater arts as a rich field for community involvement. The department now offers three youth theater groups, the Candy Apple Players for pre-schoolers through second grade, the Knapsack Players for grades three through five and the Rising Stars for grades six through eight.

THE GROUPS take their shows on tour to at least two schools in the district. Junior thespians trained by these groups appeared in "The Music Man," and the hope is the classes will feed young talent to the Bloomfield Players. To encourage older performers, Bloomfield Hills runs a series of workshops on acting, dancing, and how to audition and be successful in a show like "Dolly!"

Montross casts a show according to her own version rather than by studying previous successful productions. "I don't like to see the movie before I direct a show and I don't read stage directions," she says. "I do what I feel. I don't like to see a carbon copy of everybody else's show."

As clearly as she knows that she doesn't want to mimic other productions, Montross knows she likes to make audiences feel part of the action of the show. It's part of her directing style.

"I like to break the barriers" (between players and audience), she says. In "Dolly!" the players parade down the aisles from the back of the house and the vivacious Dolly stops along her route to pass out business cards and greet people in the audience. And what do audience members say as she smiles her irresistible smile and shakes their hands? What else but — "Hello, Dolly!"

Performances of "Hello, Dolly!" are at 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday, from Oct. 26 to Nov. 4, at the Lahser High School Theater, 3458 Lahser Road, Bloomfield Hills. For ticket information, or for more information, call the Bloomfield Hills Recreation Department at 433-0885.

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