

Suspense builds to

Performances of the St. Dunstan's Guild of Cranbrook production of "An Act of the Imagination" continue through Saturday at the playhouse in Bloomfield Hills. For ticket information, call 644-0527.

"An Act of the Imagination," the Bernard Slade murder mystery currently offered by St. Dunstan's Guild of Cranbrook, has enough unexpected plot twists to keep the viewer outsmarted to the very end. The opening night presentation started slowly but built in intensity.

At his country home outside London, prominent mystery writer Arthur Putnam (Tom Spriggs) has just completed his first romantic novel. His wife Julia (Sylvia Rowell) wonders whether the affair chronicled in the book was a real one or just "an act of the imagination." As the play progresses, the title phrase takes on many different levels of meaning.

Young Brenda Simmons (Lizabeth Brooks) shows up claiming to have been Putnam's mistress, then soon after disappears, apparently the victim of a violent murder. All evidence points to Putnam. Is he being framed, or is the always-absorbed man losing his mind?

The cast does a competent job throughout, and the slow pacing of the first act is a least partly inherent in the play and not all in Charles Campbell's direction.



Barbara Michals

SPRIGGS IS very believable as the absent-minded writer, who neglects to notice that his wife stopped drinking alcohol 10 years ago or that his fly is open at a particularly inopportune moment. He carries a heavy load of dialogue and most of the time does a good job, except when his character is stuck with delivering some impossibly heavy-handed dialogue on loyalty.

Howell is fine as Julia, easily switching from ebullient to worried to overwrought as the plot unfolds. Brooks both looks and sounds wonderfully tart as Putnam's alleged mistress.

As Simon, Putnam's ne'er-do-well son from his first marriage, John Marshall is convincingly snaky. John Besley Lake is credible as the local

new editor, and Cynthia Fordham Easton is very strong in the small role of Brooke Carmichael, also alleged to have been Putnam's mistress.

Bob Ralsch's set design for the Putnam's living room-study is attractive and works well, and Andrew McMechan's lighting is especially effective in the final transitions of Act II.

All the cast members are consistently good with the British accents, though Lake and Rowell have an obvious edge as native Brits. The distinctions are noticeable between the detective's working-class accent, Brenda's lower-class one and everyone else's upper-class speech.

Barbara Michals teaches high school English in Southfield. A theater critic for the last 18 years, she is an inveterate playgoer who regularly catches up on all the New York productions.

table talk

Psychic reader

Corry, the psychic reader, gives complimentary palmistry, tarot cards and crystal ball readings from 5-8 p.m. Wednesdays at Tango's Bistro at the Radisson Plaza Hotel in Southfield.

American Harvest

Schoolcraft College's American Harvest Restaurant is staffed and operated by the college's culinary arts students. Gourmet lunches include such specialties as Caesar's Salad prepared tableside, grilled medallions of beef tenderloin with whiskey sauce and black beans, garden vegetable sandwich roulade with havarti cheese, and a dessert tray. Hours are 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday and 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. for a Friday buffet.

Crabhouse

Fran O'Brien's Maryland Crabhouse is celebrating its grand opening at the Auburn Hills Plaza in Auburn Hills. The Maryland-style crab-

house offers Maryland Blue Crabs, flown in live for patrons three times a week. Baked Crab Imperial, Steamed Snow Crab, Soft Shell Crab and Authentic Maryland Crab Cakes are on the menu. Soups and chowders are made fresh daily, and the house specialty is Maryland Spiced Crab Soup. For more information call 332-7744.

Dad'z Chicken

Only Amish chickens grace the roster at the new Dad'z Chicken carry-out restaurant in Sylvan Lake. Sam Zawideh, owner of the Kingsley Inn in Bloomfield Hills, is the dad in Dad'z Chicken. For call-ahead orders, dial 683-7030.

Special torte

An all-white chocolate mousse torte, decorated with American flags, is being offered by Monchelle Lamore in Bloomfield Hills. The restaurant, chocolate shop and French bakery features the special torte to honor American troops in Operation Desert Storm. It comes in two sizes: small, serving 10-12, at

\$24.95 and large, serving 16, at \$39.95.

For charities

Sales of the Danny Raskin "La Pizza Latina" and Dan Mountney's "Philadelphia Cheesesteak Pizza" at America's Pizza Cafe in Southfield and Detroit have resulted in the donation of \$2,500 to each of their favorite charities. Their pizzas were prize-winners in the second annual celebrity gourmet pizza-making contest. Raskin (first prize) chose Variety — the Children's Charity and Mountney (second prize), the Salvation Army, to receive charitable donations.

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