

# Entertainment

Keely Wygonik editor/953-2105



Thursday, November 14, 1991 O&E

(O7B)

## Home-grown talent thrives in opera company

Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta "The Mikado" opens Nov. 15 at the Fisher Theatre for 15 performances. For ticket information, call MOT at 874-SING.

By William Courtant  
staff writer

Although the Michigan Opera Theatre has become one of the top companies of its size in the country, it has always been a home-grown enterprise.

From its founder and director David DiCatero to its cast, MOT has taken advantage of the wealth of talent in Southeast Michigan. And those many performers have not only taken part in the company's success, but in many instances, have used MOT as a springboard to other area performances and even national appearances.

Some MOT performers, like Mary Callaghan Lynch, have been with the company since "the early days" when productions were fewer, and audiences were less sure of what to expect. Lynch, who will appear in the lead role for "The Mikado" beginning Nov. 15, started with the company 13 years ago.

"I started in the chorus," said Lynch. "Then I got small roles. Then I played the leading role of Yum-Yum in 'The Mikado' 10 years ago."

BUT LYNCH is not just appearing with the group simply because she's available or lives in the area. The Birmingham mother of two has played Yum-Yum four times, has worked with other production companies and is now a full-time performer.

"I do some commercial work in radio," she said. "And I continue to take lessons and do some coaching."

MOT also depends on many talented performers, like Patricia Pierobon of Troy, who are not full-time. Pierobon, a chorus performer for six seasons with MOT, came in with a strong opera background.

"I performed with the Scottish National Opera," said the Troy mother of two in her native country's accent. "I never really had a chance to pursue a career here."

But with her children grown, Pierobon has had a chance to practice, take voice lessons, and re-hone her vocal skills. Pierobon is quite happy to be a member of the chorus. She also likes Italian opera the best and performed the MOT's production of "La Traviata" in 1990.

ROSALIN GAUSTELLA, a performer with MOT since 1985, has seen her repertoire grow from strictly chorus parts to include some solo work.

Like many of the company's performers, the Plymouth resident works with other area companies, including the Warren Symphony Orchestra. And like most MOT members, Gaustella has a busy family life. And her experience with MOT? That's also typical.

"I've had a very good experience," the mother of three said. "The people are good to work with."

Paul Silver, a veteran of 16 MOT productions, has found a way to combine a business career with his love of musical theater.

"Eleven years ago I auditioned on the phone on a dare," said the 29-year-old Troy resident. "I had to sing over the phone."

Silver won the part as an extra in "Fidelio" and has been performing with the company ever since.

"I felt really intimidated by opera," Silver said. "But once I saw one, I was really hooked."



DOUGLAS SUSALLA/staff photographer

Michigan Opera Theatre has thrived, in part, because of the availability of talented performers and staff who live in southeastern Michigan. Lending their talents to MOT's production

of "The Mikado" are (left to right) Rosalyn Gaustella of Plymouth, Paul Silver of Troy, Mary Callaghan Lynch of Birmingham and Judith Szeff of Troy.

SILVER, WHO is a network manager for a computer marketing company, said there is a lot to learning even a small part in an opera.

"Although I've performed mostly in Italian, we've had productions in Polish, German and French. We don't have to be fluent, but we have to know what we're saying."

And Silver said MOT's audience is getting younger. If so, longtime Livonia resident Deloris Tobis probably has something to do with it.

Tobis, who has five grown daughters, arranges MOT presentations for schools and groups throughout the state. Presentations for kindergartners to sixth graders include "Little Red Riding Hood," a one-act opera by Mozart based on a familiar story for kids. Older students and adults may see a Broadway show.

"It serves a dual purpose," Tobis said. "We need to have future supporters of the arts. But there is also enrichment. A lot of people hear the word opera and say 'yuck.'"

"They think of a fat lady singing. This is a way to show them what opera really is."

TOBIS' MESSAGE has not been lost in southeast Michigan where MOT has gone from a tiny company with two productions a year, to a company with a full-time staff of 30 and the prospect of having its own theater by 1994. And maybe some of MOT's success is due to the variety of productions, which range from opera to musical, and even dance.

Tobis said that is as it should be.

"That's why it's called Michigan Opera Theatre," she said. "It's both opera and theater."

Still opera, with its large scale, reliance on some of the greatest masters of classical music, and stories to match, is the most attractive vehicle for many performers.

"Opera combines acting and vocals," said Lynch. "You have to have both."

"I have a strong theater background," she said. "So Gilbert and Sullivan has come very easy for me. It's my forte."

## Los Angeles Piano Quartet taps into limited repertoire

With the proliferation of numerous chamber groups in this country, it may seem that there is little left to say that hasn't been already said. Yet, some groups successfully tap into some categories that, up to recently, received only a limited amount of special attention.

The Los Angeles Piano Quartet is such a group. Consisting of pianist James Bonn, violinist Joseph Genuardi, violist Randolph Kelly and cellist Peter Rejto, this group features a repertoire almost completely dedicated to the piano quartet literature.

Unlike the prolific literature of the string quartet, the repertoire of the piano quartet is rather limited.

Its most established items — such as the three piano quartets by Brahms and the one in G minor by Mozart — were not featured on the program offered at the Cranbrook

House on Nov. 5, an event of the Cranbrook Guild series. Instead, we were offered an insight into some of the less exposed works.

THE LEAST established of these is the work by the contemporary American composer John Harbison. His lengthy title is indicative of its unusual frame: "Nov. 19, 1928: Illuminations in four episodes for piano and string trio."

This 1988 work is a tribute to Schubert, who died on the aforementioned date and who is presented here in a futuristic light.

While we may never know how Schubert would have reacted to this unorthodox work, it does offer some thought-provoking material even to those who, like myself, have never heard this work before.



Avigdor Zoramp

Among its strongest ties with the past is the fugue in the final movement, suggesting a post-mortem completion of a task that Schubert was assigned by his teacher, Sechter, and didn't live long enough to conclude.

While the similarity between some of these bars and Bach's advanced variations from the "Art of the Fugue" is more than casual, it nevertheless provides good listening.

THE PIANO quartets in C minor by Faure and in E flat major by Schumann do enjoy some limited exposure.

Faure, whose light and airy texture would tend to make his music closer to that of Debussy than to the more heavily textured style of Saint Saens, sounded too close to the latter on this occasion.

In particular, the crackling Scherzo sounded overweight, losing some

of its bouncy agility in this performance.

But overall, it fell within the bounds of a valid interpretation that can be appreciated even by those who may disagree with some of the specific details.

The Schumann Quartet emerged with cheerful brightness and intensity, depicting Schumann in one of his more optimistic dispositions. The forced rendition of the final movement didn't obscure its clarity.

MANY PERFORMANCES of piano quartets are by members of different ensembles who collaborate with a member from outside the group — such as the Beaux Arts Trio with an extra violinist, for example. Rarely do we hear a group that has developed its own sense of integrity in this under-represented medium.

Pianist Bonn tends to have a somewhat dominant role, similar to that of Pressler from the Beaux Arts Trio. Among the strings, violinist Genuardi clearly emerges as second-in-command on many occasions.

Much of it, however, is due to the design of the music itself. Wherever there is a need for a team effort, there is a good sense of unity among all four members.

The Los Angeles Piano Quartet is a group of four capable artists, to be sure. But beyond that, they bridge a most important gap and fulfill an important need in their area of specialization.

Avigdor Zoramp, born in Poland, educated in Israel and the United States, has a Ph.D. in math and has studied piano, music theory and history.

MEADOW-BROOK  
THEATRE  
presents

Agatha Christie's Classic Thriller

# TEN LITTLE INDIANS

Sponsored by Ford

Now through  
November 24

Call 377-3300  
for ticket information

Presented in cooperation  
with  
Observer & Eccentric  
NEWSPAPERS

The 26th season of  
Oakland University's  
Professional Theatre  
Company

24366 Grand River  
13 blocks west of  
Telegraph

**DON PEDRO'S** OPEN 7 DAYS  
537-1450

SPECIALS  
WED. & SUN.  
MARGARITAS  
AND DRAFT BEER

\*Margaritas  
\*Mexican Beer

**\$9.95 MEXICAN SAMPLER FOR TWO**

Includes: Steak Fajita, 2 Tacos, Cheese Enchilada,  
El Pato, Guacamole, Salsa, Rice & Beans  
Dine-In Only - With Coupon  
Expires 11/30/91 - Not Valid With Other Offers

**AUTHENTIC MEXICAN CUISINE**

**Hemingway's**  
Grill & Bar

PROUDLY  
PRESENTS  
**Crazy Papa's**  
CLUBBY GROUP

Premiering Nov. 15th & 16th (Every Weekend)  
Showtimes: 8 & 10 To 11 PM

Dinner Show Packages: \$35.95 for two Available  
Call for reservations: 313-681-0195  
1000 Heller Road  
Between Center Lake and Lakeville Roads  
Two for One Admission with this ad  
Expires 12-20-91

# BEST WESTERN LAPEER INN

A GET AWAY THAT'S NOT FAR AWAY

**Rooms From \$49**

- Kids 12 and Under, Stay Free -

- Indoor Pool/Whirlpool
- Indoor Waterfall
- Whirlpool Suites
- Heart Shape Jacuzzi Rooms
- Fun Center
- Rooms To Fit All Needs

Your Choice Of One:  
Fri. & Sat. = Sunday FREE or Sat. = Sunday @ 1/2 PRICE

Best Western

On M-24 1 1/2 Miles North of I-69

**Best Western**  
20% OFF ROOMS  
SUNDAY thru THURSDAY  
Expires December 30, 1991  
For more information call:  
**(313) 687-9444**  
SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY