

ON THE
MARQUEE

Ridgedale Players

Ridgedale Players Community Theatre in Troy opens its 61st season with the contemporary drama "Isn't It Romantic?" 8 p.m. Friday, Nov. 6 at the playhouse, 205 W. Long Lake Road, Troy. Shows weekends through Nov. 22. For tickets, call 644-8328.

Chamberworks

Chamberworks will present Music for Solo Harpsichord, 8 p.m. Friday, Nov. 6 at the Belian Art Center, 5980 Rochester Road, on the corner of Square Lake Road, in Troy. Tickets \$10, students and seniors, \$7. Call 643-7788 for reservations.

Group du jour

Group du jour of Farmington Hills will begin its 1992-93 concert season 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 8 in the Farmington High School auditorium, 32000 Shiloh, one block north of Grand River, and one block west of Orchard Lake Road in Farmington. Admission is \$10 adults, \$8 students and seniors, children five and under admitted free. For information, call 478-2075.

Troy Players

Troy Players opens its season with Agatha Christie's thriller, "The Hollow," 8 p.m. Friday, Nov. 6. Shows weekends through Nov. 14 at the Troy Community Center, 520 W. Big Beaver Road, Troy. For tickets, call 879-1285.

Columbus celebration

Enjoy a Musical Tribute to Columbus featuring the Madonna University Chorus performing selections by Spanish composers of the 15th and 16th centuries, 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 7. Madonna University is at I-96 and Levan in Livonia. There is no charge for this program.

Musical hit

An Off-Broadway musical hit, "Closer Than Ever" opens 8:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 12. Downtown at Punchinello's, 184 Pierce, Birmingham. Shows Thursday through Saturday until Dec. 5. For reservations, call 540-0927.

Handbell choir

The handbell choir of St. Matthews United Methodist Church, 30900 W. Six Mile Road in Livonia will be featured in a concert of sacred and secular music, 4 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 15. There is no charge for the concert, but a free will offering will be taken to be used toward the purchase of a 6th octave of handbells. A reception will follow. Call 422-6038 for information.

Wassail Feast

Buy your tickets now for the Thursday, Dec. 3 Wassail Feast hosted by the Hospitality Management Students of Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills. Tickets \$30 per person. Seating is limited, call 471-7786, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday.

Richard Kiley and Lauren Bacall star in A.R. Gurney's "Love Letters." The show chronicles the relationship of a man and woman through letters they write to each other.

By KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER



You won't see any fancy costumes or sets in A.R. Gurney's "Love Letters," which opens 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 17, at the George Burns Theatre for Performing Arts in Livonia. But you will see some wonderful, talented actors — Richard Kiley and Lauren Bacall.

"It's a very simple format," said Kiley. "It's deceptively simple. The quality of writing weaves a spell. The readers will have to use their imaginations."

"Love Letters" is performed by two actors — Kiley and Bacall — in this presentation, seated at a table, reading directly from their scripts. It chronicles the lifelong relationship of Andrew Makepeace Ladd and Melissa Gardner solely through letters they write to each other. The play takes them from young adults to adolescence, young adulthood and into middle age.

Like radio, Kiley said "Love Letters" relies on the "magic of the voice," to get its point across. But unlike radio, the audience gets to see the actor's facial expressions which help.

"It's beautifully written," said Kiley. "A.R. Gurney is a skillful writer. He writes about kind of life. The characters come from privileged families. They're very well off."

"You learn about people, who on the face of things, should have it made. But they're victims of life's problems too."

Kiley, who has done the show be-



"Love Letters" Starring Lauren Bacall and Richard Kiley opens 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 17, and plays through Sunday, Nov. 22, at the George Burns Theatre for Performing Arts in Livonia.

fore opposite Bacall, Joanne Woodward and Julie Harris, said it will appeal to all everyone because the themes are timeless, and everyone will see a bit of themselves in it.

"The things that survive are those that touch humanity," he said. Another reason to see the show is Bacall. "She's wonderful. I've known her a long time," said Kiley. "Some film people are marvelous in front of the camera, but fade on stage. She has a kind of intelligence that makes

this kind of play work."

Kiley has appeared at the Fisher Theatre before, but this is his first visit to Metro Detroit's western suburbs. "I've never heard of Livonia before," he said. "I hope it's nice."

The George Burns Theatre for the Performing Arts is at 33300 Plymouth Road, at the corner of Farmington Road in Livonia, one mile south of the I-96 expressway and two miles east of the I-275 expressway.

Tickets for "Love Letters" range

from \$25 to \$45 depending on performance and seating, and can be purchased in person at the theater box office, all Hudson's and Harmony House locations. To charge tickets, call 645-0066. For group sales or season tickets, call 1-800-559-8000.

The George Burns Theatre for Performing Arts' production of "Love Letters" opens 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 17, and runs through Sunday, Nov. 22. For ticket information call 645-6666.

First Theater Guild's 'Oklahoma' wonderful

Performances of the First Theater Guild of Birmingham production of "Oklahoma" continue through Nov. 8 at Kress Auditorium of the First Presbyterian Church. For ticket information call 573-6762.

Many a new day has dawned since "Oklahoma" premiered on Broadway 50 years ago. If there are not exciting revivals being planned it is because the musical has really never been out of the repertoire of every community theater and high school drama department in the country.



MARY JANE DOERR

The First Theater Guild ceased the opportunity to return to Will Rodgers country, Claremore, Okla., and celebrate this event with a light-hearted production at the First Presbyterian Church in Birmingham.

Besides the chance to listen to some old favorites like "Oh What a Beautiful Mornin'," and "People will say we're in Love," there are several good reasons, and one in particular, to sit through this three-hour production — to see David Sikkelee play Curly.

If anyone can match Gordon McRae's smile and "oh shucks" good looks, Sikkelee can. And, Laurey is wrong in the musical. There is no bullfrog in this voice. Sikkelee is a natural singer with enough strong vo-

cal training to end his "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'" in a lovely falsetto.

Sikkelee can act. His scene in the smoke house with Jud, played by a scary Dracula-like character Michael J. O'Neill, is a satisfying blend of humor and serious confrontation.

Obviously, director Barbara Anne Gowan has cast this show for voices — with Sikkelee in the lead coupled with Karla Peterson as Laurey. Peterson is another natural singer with the quality part of her voice precisely in this middle range. She plays a darling, hard to get Laurey, and sings like an angel.

Like most productions of "Oklahoma," this show was too long, troubled by slow entrances. An option might

have been to cut the overture, but that would have meant cutting Roger Walton's flute solos. Not good.

Another possible cut — the "Dream Ballet" which is usually a nightmare, is such an integral part of the story, cutting it, unfortunately, is hardly possible.

In this show, Dianne Nowland as the dancing Laurey showed why as she elaborated on Laurey's fears in her dance. She must have accumulated few bruises, brutally thrown around as she was by the forceful O'Neill as Jud Fry, a wonderful sequence.

Mary Jane Doerr of Troy is a full-time teacher and freelance writer who specializes in opera and musical theater.

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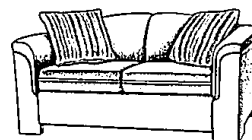
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