

ON THE MARQUEE



KEELY WYGNONIK

St. Agatha graduate scores role in 'Rudy'

Entertainment has a new look, and more space for play reviews, concert previews, movie and restaurant information. We're anxious to hear what you think of our changes — leave your comments on my Voice Mail — 953-2105, or write Keely Wygnonik, Taste and Entertainment Editor, 36261 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150.

Look for announcements of upcoming plays and concerts in two new calendars — "On Stage" and "Classics." We'll continue featuring restaurants on the second and fourth Thursday of the month in our "Memorable Meals" column.

Rachel Churches of Redford is going to see the movie "Rudy" on Sunday for the third time. Her son, Joe, 29 appears in the film as one of the line-men for Notre Dame.

He's a graduate of St. Agatha High School in Redford, and teaches industrial arts in Eau Claire, Mich. Churches and his four brothers all played football at St. Agatha's.

"He's in seven or nine scenes of the movie," said Rachel. "They were looking for big guys and asked him to audition. He got the part. Some of his friends are in the movie, too. It's really a wonderful story."

Here are some upcoming events to put on your calendar.

■ Famed trumpeter Doc Severinsen will be featured at a celebrity luncheon hosted by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra Hall Volunteer Council 11 a.m. Friday, Oct. 29 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Dearborn. Tickets range from \$35 per person to \$500. Call 962-1000, weekdays 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Many of you remember Severinsen from NBC's "Tonight Show." Severinsen will be performing with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra on Oct. 29.



"We thought this would be an up-close, personal occasion for people who have seen him perform for years," said Isabelle Smith of Birmingham, who is DSO Volunteer Council Board member. "He will be signing autographs, and giving a 20- to 30-minute talk at the luncheon." Event proceeds will benefit the DSO Annual Fund.

■ Metropolitan Youth Symphony, consisting of 300 musicians in grades five through 12 kicks off

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LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Entertainment next week:

■ Movie critic John Monaghan reviews Tim Burton's "The Nightmare Before Christmas."
■ Ana Berbera sings the role of the slandering music teacher Don Basilio in Michigan Opera Theatre's season opener, "The Barber of Seville."

Take a 'Black Coffee' mystery break

■ Eric Tavares keeps everyone guessing whodunit in Agatha Christie's "Black Coffee" opening Oct. 28 at Meadow Brook Theatre.

By KEELY WYGNONIK
STAFF WRITER



Spend an evening guessing whodunit at Meadow Brook Theatre's presentation of Agatha Christie's "Black Coffee" opening Oct. 28 at the theater on the campus of Oakland University.

"It's a wonderfully entertaining Agatha Christie thriller," said director Terence Kilburn who is also artistic director of the theater. "The characters are colorful and eccentric."

For Kilburn the play presented a special challenge — "It hasn't been done on TV and it's not very familiar," he said. "It's the first play he wrote. The others were adapted by other writers. It shows what a forward thinker she was."

The mystery unfolds as Sir Claud Amory, a wealthy physicist who has produced a formula for the atomic bomb, is murdered. Someone poisoned his cup of black coffee.

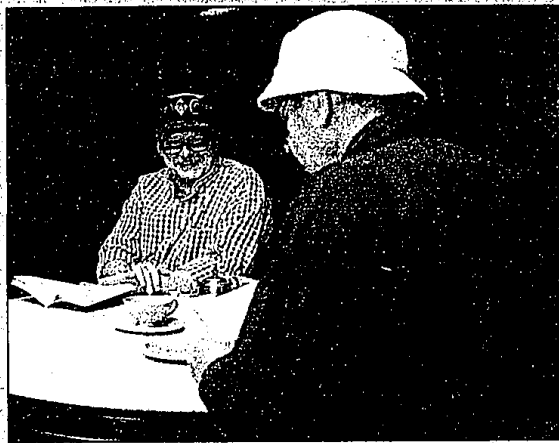
In the 1930s the idea of an atomic bomb was almost science fiction," said Kilburn. "No one had any idea that it was close to reality. It was rather clever of her to be thinking of that."

Detective Hercule Poirot must sort through a long list of suspects including jilted family members, mistreated servants and a black-mailer to discover the culprit.

"Since we know who the criminal is, having interesting characters makes this show fun for us to do," said Kilburn.

"We have a lot of Agatha Christie fans. The shows always sell out, we've scheduled extra matinees anticipating the demand."

Kilburn said he is a great admirer



JIM ROBERTS/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

PREVIEW

of Christie and, of how her plays have been presented. "We're trying to be as authentic as possible to make her story come to life, and create an English atmosphere."

"There's a special dimension to a mystery play. You have to find ways of casting suspicion on as many characters as possible to keep the audience intrigued."

The task is in the able hands of Eric Tavares as the legendary sleuth Hercule Poirot.

"A lot of people think Poirot is French, he's Belgian," said Tavares who first performed at Meadow Brook 20 years ago as Count Dracula.

"In some ways I think it's easier to do Shakespeare than Agatha Christie. Poirot is the catalyst. He asks the questions."

Tavares, who now makes his

home in Florida, said he enjoys coming to Michigan to perform at Meadow Brook. "I miss the seasons," he said.

"I love being here during cold weather. When you're cold you can always get warm, but when you're warm you can't always get cold. I go from my air conditioned house, to an air conditioned car to an air conditioned theater."

Of the show he says it will keep the audience guessing. "Each character is a fascinating individual," he said.

In addition to Tavares, cast members include — Yolanda Lloyd Delgado as prime suspect Lucia Amory, and Paul Hopper as the mysterious Dr. Carelli.

David Duchene portrays Johnson and Dr. Graham; Tamara Evans, Barbara Amory; Bill MacKenzie,

Rehearsing Paul Hopper (left) as Dr. Carelli and Eric Tavares as the sleuth Hercule Poirot, rehearse a scene in Meadow Brook Theatre's production of Agatha Christie's "Black Coffee."

ON STAGE

"BLACK COFFEE"

■ Theater: Meadow Brook Theatre, on the campus of Oakland University, Rochester.

★ Curtain time: 8 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 27 (preview), 8 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 28 (opening), 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Oct. 29-30; 2 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 30; 6:30 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 31. Show continues through Nov. 21, call theater for additional times.

★ Prices: Preview, \$16, Regular shows range from \$18 to \$24.50. Student, Senior, and group discounts available. Call 377-3300, Group Sales, 370-3316.

Tredwell; Thomas D. Mahard, Sir Claud Amory; Joseph Reed, Inspector Japp; Lance A. Retallie; Richard Amory; and Alexander Webb, Edward Raynor.

'Lend Me A Tenor' needs brush up to shine



MARK S. CARLEY

ing coffee. I guess it's true what they say — the family that does plays together stays together.

Happy, nepotism works once again at the Barn, where Marc Rosati does a fine turn as Max, the nebbish with great vocal chords, in Ken Ludwig's popular comedy "Lend Me A Tenor."

One thing I like about Farmington Players — it's a family affair. Look in any program and you'll see a whole passel of McSweeney, Gilkes and Rosatis trodding the boards, manning the light booth, gathering props and serving coffee.

Poor Max — his girlfriend wants an affair (but not with him), his boss is a raving lunatic, and the world's greatest tenor has just dropped dead on him.

Mix this fiasco with a jealous Italian wife, a sleazy soprano, a domineering opera patron and a stunning Art Deco set with six doors, and you've got a recipe for rollicking farce.

Farce, alas, is a bit like a jigsaw puzzle. You've got to have all the right pieces, but the pieces also have to fit together. That's why this production provides a mildly amusing evening rather than the hoped for laugh riot.

Most of the pieces are quite good. Rosati provides just the right combination of swagger and insecurity for Max. Beth Cole and Diana Sovei

LEND ME A TENOR
Theater: Farmington Players, 32332 W. 12 Mile, Farmington Hills
Curtain time: Shows 8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday; 7 p.m. Sundays, through Nov. 6. Matinee 2 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 31. Tickets: Tickets \$8, call 653-2955.

have made a nice girl-next-door. Doug Noel, as opera impresario Saunders is properly blustery, and Ron Metayer is a likeable and funny Tito Merelli, the great opera star who may or may not be dead.

Some nice surprises in the minor roles are Helen Dollalio as a rather Wagnerian opera patron and Frank Gintis as an extremely annoying bellhop.

So, the pieces to the puzzle are all here, but they don't quite fit. There are lots of reasons.

But, hey, the show runs for four weeks and director Sharlan Douglas can probably fix most of this in one brush-up rehearsal.

Mark S. Carley is active in local community theater, both onstage and behind the scenes.

Talented cast makes 'Oliver' a winner



BARBARA MICHALS

"Oliver!" boasts a 32-member cast with an abundance of talent and vitality. This curvy and talented Nancy Gurwin production at the Jewish Community Center Aaron DeRoy Theatre is fast-paced and delightfully entertaining.

The Lionel Bart musical, based on Charles Dickens' "Oliver Twist," recreates the grimier side of Victorian London, a world of grinding poverty and crime. Yet the wonderful score and broad comedy effectively lighten the mood, as does the tale's old-fashioned morality where virtue triumphs and the bad guys get their comeuppance.

Oliver (David Langham) is an orphan, raised in the parish workhouse on a regimen of greed and cruelty. Always underfed, he enflames the authorities by having the audacity to ask for more than his daily portion.

Sold as an under-apprentice to an undertaker and his family, life there quickly proves even bit harsh, and Oliver runs away. Cold

REVIEW

and hungry on the streets, he is befriended by the Artful Dodger (Steve Thompson) and introduced to Fagin (Henry Traurig) and his band of child pickpockets.

As Oliver, 12-year-old Lano-ham has a stylish, flawless delivery. His angelic face radiates purity, and his voice is impressively sweet and clear through the plaintive "Where Is Love?"

Traurig is a wonderful Fagin, striking a good balance between broad comedy and menacing nastiness. Songs like "Pick a Pocket or Two" make him an endearingly harmless old fool. Though he masterminds a theft ring and must keep the children scared into loyalty, it is abundantly clear that Fagin treats his young charges better than those who pretend to righteousness.

Maggie Clennon is outstanding as Nancy, the fallen woman with a good heart who befriends young Oliver at the risk of her own life. In addition to her strong vocal skills, Clennon makes her character fully dimensional. Her torch song solo "As Long As He Needs Me" is sung with heart-wrenching emotion, a very wel-



Musical: Maggie Clennon as Nancy and David Langham (Oliver) star in the Nancy Gurwin production of "Oliver" through Oct. 31 at the Jewish Community Center.

come deviation from the way it is usually belted out to showcase the singer instead of the character. Thompson's Artful Dodger is perfection. This 13-year-old has

"OLIVER"
Theater: Jewish Community Center with Nancy Gurwin Productions, 6600 W. Maple Road, West Bloomfield
Curtain time: 8 p.m. Saturdays, Oct. 24, and Oct. 30, 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 24; and 2 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 31.
Tickets: \$15 general admission, \$12.50 seniors and \$10 students, call 661-1000 or 354-0545.

enormous stage presence, sings and dances with great verve and flair, and fully utilizes facial expressions and body English to convey every nuance and rivet the audience's attention.

As Mr. Bumble, the workhouse beadle, Mark Holden starts a little weak but quickly warms to the rich comedy of his character. Kim Keen is amusing as Mrs. Corney, the workhouse matron who Bumble woos, and the two do a nice duet of "I Shall Scream" as they court.

Kors VanMourik is polished and convincing as the uncouth Mr. Sowerberry, the undertaker.

See "OLIVER," next page

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