

ON THE MARQUEE



KEELY WYGONIK

Writer, child star works to help others

This has been celebrity week! On Friday I had lunch with Academy Award-winning screenwriter Bruce Joel Rubin. Monday afternoon I talked on the phone with Butch Patrick, whom many of you remember as Eddie on the popular TV series "The Munsters."

Rubin and Patrick both use their talents to help others. Rubin hopes his movies will bring families closer together. Patrick speaks to students about the importance of getting an education, and helps aspiring actors and actresses through his work with the American Performing Arts Network.

Turn to the movie page to learn about Rubin's new movie "My Life" opening Friday at metro Detroit movie theaters — bring tissues. "My Life" is sad, and so funny that you'll have tears in your eyes from laughing.

The saying "When one door closes, another one opens," certainly is true for Rubin who wanted to be an actor when he was five. He was in all the plays in school, and dreamed of going to New York to be in theater. A teacher told him he couldn't act, but he could direct. It was devastating, Rubin said, but he listened to her.

At 40, Patrick is still "Little Eddie Munster" to a lot of people. It doesn't bother him: In fact, he laughs about it. "I get a lot of calls around Halloween," he said. "I was in four other TV series, but people remember Eddie."

Patrick will be in the Detroit area Nov. 20-21 with Julie Matthews of the American Performing Arts Network to teach a seminar for actors of all ages who would like to get into show business.

Matthews and Paul Petersen from the "Donna Reed Show" have developed a program to teach people about the many aspects of working in movies, television, commercials and Broadway.

See MARQUEE, 2C

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Entertainment next week:

- The Village Players of Birmingham present "Lettice and Lovage" a hilarious comedy.
- The Theatre Guild of Livonia-Redford opens its 40th season with "Private Lives."

Kick back, enjoy 'Life is a Beach'

■ Join the fun at the Millennium Theatre Center in Southfield where "Life is a Beach," and Motown is hip. Revisit the summer of 1963.

BY SYLVIA BELL
SPECIAL WRITER

Opening Night at "Life is a Beach" at Southfield's new Millennium Theatre Center brought out a curious crowd seeking outrageous sights, and too-cool songs of the 1960s.

Half the fun in attending this original, multi-media extravaganza, directed by Michigan native Jeff Nahon — is in becoming part of the show. The performance on Oct. 27 was delayed 20 minutes as the lobby beach party carried on amidst the sand, palm trees, Pina Colodas and summer-time games including: volleyball, limbo and hula-hoop.

Many theater goers dressed in beach attire, and yet some more conservatively. Dr. Joseph Abbato of Farmington Hills, left his beach gear behind, but enjoyed watching his daughter Andrea play volleyball and later kick back to watch the show in a lounge chair.

"I hadn't exactly planned on ending up at the beach tonight," he said. "But this is a lot of fun!" Other patrons such as Alan Marie of West Bloomfield dressed in 'big straw hats, shades and sandals. "When I step out for an event, I become the event," she said.

The general consensus seemed to be that the new Millennium theater



Beach party: The Ensemble from 'Life is a Beach' features a talented cast of local performers who sing and dance to tunes from the 1960s.

REVIEW

is a marvelous place. "Life is a Beach" is about how Debbie meets Chuck (cute with a capital K), they fall in love before a backdrop of "Beachgirls & the Monster" film clips, become estranged when Mike eludes Elvis, steps in, and eventually reunite — all in the course of a day. In between this simple boy meets girl theme, are run-ins with a cast of exaggerated characters

all mocking society's myriad of stereotypes.

Mary Vinette who last appeared in "Nooner" at the Purple Rose Theatre in Chelsea, takes on the role of a Mae West type named Babe Buxley, the Bikini Bombshell, along with her sleazy Hollywood agent.

Other principals include Benita Charles, last seen in Detroit Repertory Theatre's "Unchanging Love." Here she is better known as Trixie/

See KICK BACK, 2C

ON STAGE

"LIFE IS A BEACH"

■ Theater: Millennium Theatre Center, 15600 J.L. Hudson Drive, Southfield
■ Curtain time: 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, 3 p.m. Sundays through Dec. 5.
■ Tickets: Range from \$16.50 to \$22.50. Student, senior, and group discounts available. All seats reserved. Call 592-7000 or Ticketmaster, 645-8666.

Soprano merry about MOT role

BY MARY JANE DOERR
SPECIAL WRITER

Mary and her twin Joseph were born a week before Christmas, but that is not the reason Mary Callaghan Lynch is so merry.

This week she opens in "The Merry Widow," Michigan Opera Theatre's lavish production. As Valencienne, this is a time for Mary to be Mary and just plain merry.

"I really can't wait to get up there," said the highly energetic soprano between preliminary rehearsals. "I feel so comfortable on the stage. I love it."

Lynch's parents met at Syracuse when they were appearing in "H.M.S. Pinafore." No baby switching here, Lynch has carried on with the tradi-

PREVIEW

tion and has appeared in 12 MOT productions in the last 17 years, including MOT's highly successful "Pirates of Penzance." Dorothy Danner, stage director for "The Merry Widow," has called her the best G&S soprano in the country.

"I am thrilled to be back working with Dorothy Danner," Lynch who last worked with Danner 10 years ago in MOT's "The Mikado." "She understands the challenge of making the characters in this show real."

Lynch has also sung major roles with the Toledo Opera, the Dayton Opera, and the Glimmerglass Opera

in New York. This spring she has a 'call back' at the English National Opera in London to sing for Mark Elder.

"My children are older now so it would be possible for me to do it," said Lynch who is married to Patrick Lynch of Lynch & Sons, also a singer.

Franz Lehár's "The Merry Widow" is one of the greatest and most popular operettas, composed in 1905 at the decline of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It is the story of the humorous requiting of an unrequited love. Count Danilo (Ron Raines) has long been in love with the widow Hanna, (Judy Kaye, Tony Award winner for

See SOPRANO, 2C



Merry Mary: Mary Callaghan Lynch stars as Valencienne.

Women in Jake's life quirky, wonderful



BARBARA MICHAELS

"Jake's Women," the latest play in the Neil Simon canon, is tepid material at best, and a miscast lead character in the current Birmingham Theatre production only adds to the disappointment.

Simon has been Broadway's leading writer of comedy for over 30 years. Through his work has taken a much more serious, reflective turn for the last decade or so, one still expects the playwright's witty repartee and astute characterizations. "Jake's Women" delivers very little of either.

Jake (Steve Elmore) is a renowned middle-aged writer whose second marriage is falling apart largely due to his still grieving over the death of his beloved first wife. Sound familiar? Simon hashed out his own grief and built in his autobiographical, very successful "Chapter Two" many years ago. "Jake's Women" goes over the same ground, but this time the dialogue and the characters are flatter and less likeable.

The main gimmick here is that most of the dialogue are scenes imagined in Jake's head. As he sinks closer to a complete breakdown he becomes increasingly unable to separate what is real from what is imagined.

As Jake remembers how he met his second wife Maggie (Sherry Skinker) at a chic party in the Hamptons, it is clear that these are supposed to be sophisticated, urbane people. Elmore seems the very antithesis. He seems frumpy, more the image of a fatherly Mid-

ON STAGE

"JAKE'S WOMEN"
Theater: Birmingham Theatre, 211 S. Woodward.
Curtain time: 8 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday; 2 p.m. Wednesday; and Sundays 2 and 7 p.m. through Dec. 5.
Tickets: Range from \$19 to \$32.50. Call 644-3533 or Ticketmaster, 645-6666.

REVIEW

die America couch potato than a savvy Manhattanite, and his delivery completely lacks the brittle, sardonic edge that would give his lines a comic boost.

Shinker sometimes gives Maggie laudable dramatic intensity, but the script never allows the audience to really know or care much about what makes her tick.

Nicola Sheara makes Jake's sister Karen the most dimensional character. She's quirky, whiny, caustic as well as lovingly sympathetic to her brother, and Shera's expressive face and vocal inflections are wonderful.

As Edith, Jake's therapist, Victoria Boothby also has a good, crisp delivery that makes her highly credible.

DeAnne Kemp is perky and likeable as Jake's daughter Molly at 12. Dana Ertischek as Molly at 21, Elizabeth Richmond as first wife Julie, and Kristin Baer as new flame Sheila are all perfectly

adequate.

Given the weaknesses in script and casting, director Arthur Storch is seriously handicapped, and "Jake's Women" never really

gets much beyond ho-hum.

Barbara Michaels is an inveterate playgoer who regularly catches up on all the New York productions.

Understudies wait in wings

While "Jake's Women" plays a five-week run at the Birmingham Theatre, two local actors will be among the four understudies waiting in the wings.

Geoffrey Beauchamp of Bloomfield Hills is the understudy for the lead character Jake, and Peggy Thorp of Ferndale is the understudy for two of the seven women in Jake's life.

Beauchamp and Thorp did graduate work at Wayne State University and returned to metro Detroit after getting married. Both have extensive credits with Detroit-area theaters, including Meadowbrook, as well as doing locally-produced commercials, radio and television voice-overs, and industrial films.

Unlike large-scale musicals where understudies usually have small chorus roles as well, a small-cast show like "Jake's Women" uses understudies who may never appear on the stage during the entire run even though they must be at the theater every night, ready to go on stage at a moment's notice.

Why would experienced actors want such a job? Both cited the advantage of a steady paycheck for five weeks. Though Beauchamp began his professional acting career in New York, he said he works more by basking himself in the Midwest and working in regional theater.

"You give up the lottery ticket — the chance to be discovered. I'll go on working at the same salary level, but at least I will go on working," he said.

Both actors agreed that in some ways understudying is the toughest acting job there is. "It's a lot of work and a lot of waiting," Thorp said. "But I'm ready if they need me."

Since Beauchamp's character has half of all the dialogue in the show and never leaves the stage, he attended all of the early New York rehearsals as well as the later Birmingham ones. "Even if you watch all the rehearsals, it's a whole lot different than going through the moves yourself," he said. "You do a lot of 'closet rehearsing' in your dressing room plus the one or two rehearsals held each week for the understudies once the play's run is under way."

When an understudy does have to go on for an ailing actor, "It's not like the 'star is born' myth," Beauchamp said. "It's a frightening, sweaty nightmare, and you're just trying to get through it. Though you've been watching the show every night, the other actors are used to things happening in a certain way and are not used to you."

Marhus
Sly Fox

A Thanksgiving Day Tradition!

Thursday, November 25
12 noon - 7:00 p.m.

Featuring

COMPLETE TURKEY DINNERS

with all the fixings. Including Pumpkin Pie
Adults - \$17.50
Children (under 10) - \$9.95

OR

Turkeys

CARVED TABLESIDE

Featuring complete Turkey Dinner with Whole Turkey (1½ lb. per person) Carved at your table. Six or more guests required. Leftover Turkey will be packaged to take home.

OR

Turkeys To Go . . .

Give your chef at home a break. Take out from our oven to your kitchen a roasted stuffed turkey with all the trimmings and pumpkin pie for dessert.

For Reservations or
Information Call 642-6900
725 S. Hunter • Birmingham