

ON THE MARQUEE



KEELY WYGONIK

## Dancers to present new works, tango

A variety of dance styles will be featured this weekend at exciting concerts you won't want to miss.

■ Rochester based Eisenhower Dance Ensemble, one of only a few professional dance companies in Michigan, is performing 8 p.m. Friday, March 25 at Music Hall in Detroit. Tickets are \$15 and \$25 and can be purchased at the door, 350 Madison in Detroit. Ticketmaster outlets, or by calling (810) 645-6665 or (313) 933-7689.

Titled "The Michigan Choreographer's Project," the performance will consist of premiere works by three of Michigan's outstanding choreographers — Whitley Setrakian, Gregory Patterson and EDE artistic director, Laurie Eisenhauer. "Sweet Ella Suite," a lively modern jazz dance by Patterson, is set to the music of Ella Fitzgerald. Eisenhauer will present "Rites and Passages," a full company work about evolution, discoveries, and passages through time. Setrakian will premiere "Hyaline Rash," a fast paced and edgy dance about poison and compliance set to the new music of Amy Denio.

Completing the program will be three other dances from the EDE repertory including "Love Songs," a humorous audience favorite set to the music of George Gershwin. Company dancer Giuseppe Canale, a former soloist with the Bejart Ballet, will perform a solo to the live music of pianist/composer Stanley Hollingsworth.

■ Tango and more Latin dance will be featured at the Musica Viva International Concert 8 p.m. Friday, March 25 at Smith Theatre for the performing arts on the Oakland Community College Orchard Ridge campus, south of 12 Mile off I-696. Tickets are \$20 at the door, \$18 in advance, and \$10 for an afterglow after the concert. Call (810) 932-0400.

Sensational dance duo Eduardo Dorfer and Mercedes Colon, masters of "Tango Argentino" will be performing with Alejandro Scarpino on bandoneon, and Michigan's top dancers, Paul Milligan, Lori Accen, Amy Callo, Louis Sama, and Suzy Brecht of Troy Dance Studio.

Keely Wygonik is editor of the Taste and Entertainment sections of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. She welcomes your calls and comments, 953-2105, fax 591-7279, or write: Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc. 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150.

## LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Entertainment next week:

- What's new at the movies.
- Upcoming plays and concerts

# Lincoln's voice missing in drama



HUGH GALLAGHER

Abraham Lincoln is the soul of America, the summation of all its strengths and the symbol of its agony.

Unfortunately Lincoln is a voice off in Charles Nolte's "The Last Days of Mr. Lincoln." Nolte, who directs the Meadowbrook Theatre production of his play, has fashioned a reader's theater piece around the assassination of Lincoln and its aftermath.

The works focus is not on Lincoln. The play should be called "The Last Days of John Wilkes Booth." Nolte was obviously drawn to the subject because of the handsome matinee idol turned assassin. Booth was the youngest member of a prominent acting family. Though never attaining the stature of his brothers Edwin and Junius, John Wilkes was popular with the women, the Tom Cruise of his day.

Nolte has arranged nine actors in gray r p riod costumes on several platforms. Behind them are projections of portraits, cartoons, playbills and photographs of the Civil War era. The actors take on a variety of roles, giving us a brief outline of Lincoln's character and reputation and a more detailed portrait of Booth and his gang of assassins. This group has a lot in common with the Tonya Harding entourage.

History buffs will be interested in the tidbits of historical trivia that Nolte has accumulated in his research. Unfortunately, Nolte is unable to turn historical facts into compelling drama. We are told what happens and only rarely shown. The play would have more life if it were a straight dramatization of the con-



Repeating history: Paul Hopper, Jeanne Arnold, Joseph Reed and Peter Gregory appear in "The Last Days of Mr. Lincoln."

spiracy. After all the plot included failed attacks, cross country horse chases and a deadly shootout. Nolte has some ideas about the plot and the accused plotters, showing some sympathy for Mary Surratt and none for Dr. Mudd, but his recitation of incidents raises more questions than it answers.

The acting is good enough to hold our attention. Peter Gregory Thompson resembles Booth and projects the proper ham actor dash that made Booth confuse theater with reality. Jeanne Arnold is effective as the gaunt, world weary Mary Surratt, who either was or was not a key figure in the plot to kill Lincoln, Secretary of State Seward and Vice President Johnson. Jayne Houdy-

shell makes the best of her resemblance to Mary Todd Lincoln, bringing some sympathy to playing this distressed, unhappy woman. Carl Shurr is properly regal as Edwin Booth, the greatest American actor of the 19th century and a victim of his brother's zeal. In addition to playing numerous parts, Paul Hopper and Joseph Reed provide a humorous musical interlude.

"The Last Days of Mr. Lincoln" is a playwright's notebook for an interesting play, now he has to go on to write the play.

Hugh Gallagher is production editor of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc. He has reviewed films and plays for the past 20 years.

## ON STAGE

### "The Last Days of Mr. Lincoln"

★ Theater: Meadow Brook on the campus of Oakland University in Rochester.

★ Curtain time: 8 p.m. Thursday, Friday, March 24-25, 6 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Saturday, March 26, 6:30 p.m. Sunday, March 27, 8 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday, March 29-30, 2 p.m. Wednesday, March 30. Shows through April 10, weekend times vary.

★ Tickets: Range from \$18 for Wednesday matinee to \$24.50 for Friday evening performances. Call 377-3300.

# Romance lacks magic, cast shines



BARBARA MICHAELS

"Prelude to a Kiss," a modern fairy-tale about romance and mortality, needs the "magic" of live theater and the willing suspension of disbelief to fulfill its potential effect.

The current production by St. Dunstan's Guild of Cranbrook fails to achieve that requisite magic despite some good cast efforts.

Peter (Mark Schwarz) and Rita (Janie Castagna) are a couple who meet, quickly fall in love, and marry. When a mysterious Old Man (William Everson) shows up at the wedding and kisses the bride, a transmi-

gration of souls leaves Rita in the Old Man's falling body while the latter gets a new lease on life and heads off for "her" Jamaican honeymoon in the body of the vibrant young woman.

It doesn't take Peter long to notice the inexplicable changes in the new "Rita," piece together the mystery, and try to get the real Rita back whole. He finds himself still attracted to Rita despite her transformed body. As the Old Man, Everson gives a masterful performance, effectively conveying the "changed" Rita's confusion and frustration and, back in his own body, delivering moving observations on aging and mortality.

Castagna is good as Rita, her face and manner vividly hardening when the Old Man moves into her body. Her one lapse is failing to adequately

## REVIEW

communicate Rita's anxieties, the catalyst to the whole chain of events.

Schwarz looks well-cast as Peter, but never seems fully at ease with his part. He does warm considerably in the second act, but it's too late to make his Peter really convincing. Among the supporting players, Mary Jolliffe is the most credible as Rita's mother, deft at navigating the potholes of marriage.

Obie Burch's set design enables the scene changes to be swift and impressively professional. Rita Girardi's lighting design seems lackluster when more creative lighting support could be very helpful. The pacing seems smoother in the

## ON STAGE

### "Prelude to a Kiss"

★ Theater: St. Dunstan's Guild of Cranbrook, 400 Leno Pine Road, between Lahser and Cranbrook Roads.

★ Curtain time: 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, March 25-26.

★ Tickets: General \$10, senior citizens and students, \$9. Call 644-0527.

second act, but director Jamie Richards just never achieves the right magic. Nevertheless, St. Dunstan's merits credit for frequently tackling shows that are not part of the tried-and-true community theater fare. Barbara Michaels is an inveterate playgoer who regularly catches up on all the New York productions.

**Botstorf Inn**  
**MON DAY**  
Lunch or Dinner  
Buy 1 Get 1  
**FREE**  
Lunch Maximum \$5.95  
Dinner Maximum \$8.95  
28000 Grand River at Elmhurst  
Farmington Hills, MI (313) 474-4400

**Eleventh Annual Michigan Wildlife ART FESTIVAL '94**

## All Tracks Lead to Southfield!

Michigan's premier presentation of wildlife, landscape, rural and environmental art. Hundreds of original and reproduced works of art, all for sale!

**Festival Features:**  
• Dozens of the best wildlife artists in North America  
• Free wildlife seminars • Conservation Row  
• Best Photographs in America (OWAA)  
• Celebrity Decoy Painting and Auction

FRIDAY	March 25	4 p.m.-9 p.m.
SATURDAY	March 26	9 a.m.-8 p.m.
SUNDAY	March 27	10 a.m.-5 p.m.

## Featured Artist MICHAEL GLENN MONROE

All proceeds to benefit wildlife through:

Michigan Wildlife Habitat Foundation  
6425 S. Pennsylvania, Ste. 9  
Lansing, MI 48911-5975  
(313) 862-3630

For recorded information and schedule call (313) 353-6944



**FREE PARKING**  
Festival Admission  
Adults \$5  
Under 12 \$2

March 25-27 • Southfield Pavilion (Exit 11 off I-696)

**INTERNATIONAL BUILDERS HOME FLOWER FURNITURE SHOW**  
**76th Annual**  
**COBO CENTER MARCH 19-27**

# GREATEST HOME SHOW IN THE WORLD

## EVERYTHING FOR YOUR HOME & GARDEN

### Thousands of Home & Garden Ideas

- Kitchens & Baths
- Home Electronics
- Doors & Windows
- Decorative Accessories
- Yard & Garden
- Appliances
- Remodeling
- Arts & Crafts
- Heating & Cooling
- Financing
- Pools & Spas
- Decks & Landscaping

**GET A JUMP ON THE HOME IMPROVEMENT SEASON WITH SPECIAL SHOW DISCOUNTS!**

### CLOSES SUNDAY

Meet Discovery Channel's Mr. Fix-It  
Bevery Duffie Thursday - Sunday  
Plant Sale and Flower Auction at 2 p.m. Sunday

### Featured Attractions & Exhibits

House of Nails and Treasure Chest Contests • Chevy Truck Give-A-Way  
Continuous Entertainment • Full Sized 1,850 Sq. Ft. Home  
Parade of Homes Featuring New Homes and Free Plan Book  
Expert Demonstrations on Gardening, Decorating and Remodeling

Monday through Friday 2:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.  
Saturday Noon - 10:00 p.m.  
Sunday 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Regular Admission: Adults \$5.75; Seniors and Children 12 \$3.50; Children under 12 admitted FREE  
Special Family Ticket, includes 2 adults and all the children, \$8.00 - available only at Farmer Jack and A&P

### Riverwalk Gardens

A 400 foot-long indoor river surrounded by 23 gardens created by members of the Metropolitan Detroit Landscape Association