

'Annie' is outstanding



BARBARA
MICHALS

"Annie," that staunch tribute to eternal optimism, continues to exude its charm in the current Nancy Gurwin production at the Jewish Community Center. The lively, talented cast, led by 10-year-old dynamo Dana Stiegold in the title role, earned a standing ovation on opening night.

The familiar comic-strip tale of the little orphan who gets adopted by a billionaire while the country struggles through the Depression has enormous appeal no matter how many times its viewed. The bouncy Charles Strouse-Martin Charmin songs make "Annie" a prime example of a "feel good" show.

Stiegold, even younger than the character she portrays, has impressive stage poise and uses wonderful body language and facial expressions as character enhancements. She belts out pleasing solos of "Maybe" and "Tomorrow" with perfect aplomb, and easily holds her own in ensemble pieces such as "I Think I'm Gonna Like It Here," "N.Y.C.," and "I Don't Need Anyone But You."

Ably backing Annie are a fine sextet of plucky orphans — Brooke Andrea of Livonia, Chaire

ON STAGE

"Annie"

THEATRE: Nancy Gurwin production at the Jewish Community Center, 6600 W. Maple Road, West Bloomfield.

CURTAIN TIME 8:15 p.m. Saturdays, 2 p.m. Sundays through Oct. 2.

TICKETS: General admission \$15, seniors \$12.50, students \$10. Call (610) 352-2797.

Fasi, Jenny Florkowski, Amy Gross, Morgan Rose, and Michele Sick — delivering "It's a Hard Knock Life" and "Fully Dressed."

Gary Sturm is highly convincing as Oliver Warbucks, the hardened tycoon whose heart is melted by the irrepressible Annie. Sturm has a commanding presence benefiting his character, and his pleasing voice smoothly handles "N.Y.C.," "Something Was Missing," and "I Don't Need Anyone But You."

Dana Reynolds is delightfully funny as the orphan-hating Miss Hannigan, one of the all-time great musical-comedy roles. She makes the part her own, steering clear of imitations of her Broadway and film predecessors, as she vocalizes her dislike of "Little Girls."

Sharing comedy honors with Reynolds are Jamie Richards, perfect as the shady Rooster Hannigan, and Lisa Andre, his tawdry girlfriend Lily. The trio delivers a strong, energetic "Easy Street" as they scheme against Annie.

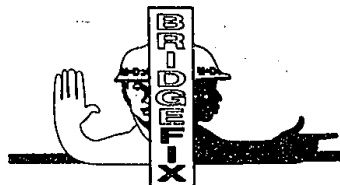
Linda Barsamian is a likable Grace Farrell, Warbucks' clever secretary with a crush on the boss, and she lends good vocal support to many of the ensemble numbers.

Edgar Guest III makes a very credible FDR, surrounded by busy, self-important cabinet members Rhone Fidler as Perkins and Mark Hammel as Hull. Mark Holden gets maximum laughs as the stodgy Ickes, turning the small part into a comic gem.

Director-choreographer Kathi Bush and music-vocal director Carole Mihalo have achieved a well-balanced, skillfully polished production. Patricia LaFrance's costumes work well throughout. David Reynolds Sr.'s set designs are fine when they are representational — the orphanage, the New York skyline — but the more literal set of Warbucks' living room looks absurdly dull, shabby and recycled.

For anyone seeking a ray of sunshine, "Annie" is the ticket.

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



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BRIDGE FIX is underway! The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) is repairing nine bridges and pedestrian walkways over the Lodge (M-10), Ford (I-94) and Fisher (I-75) freeways. When the job is done, you will be travelling over (and under) some of the safest, most secure bridges in Michigan. In the meantime, MDOT wants to keep you out of a fix, while fixing the bridges. Here's how:

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MDOT thanks you for your patience during our **BRIDGE FIX** program.

Save this information for future reference.

Concert features singer, harpist

Tom Lewis, singer, storyteller, traveler, songwriter, former submariner is widely acknowledged as North America's finest exponent of contemporary nautical songs. He will perform 7 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 25 at a House Concert in the Rochester Hills home of Phil and Althea Doolittle.

A House Concert is an event that occurs in someone's living room. Because amplification is not usually required, there are no microphones, darkened stage areas or speakers separating the performers from the audience. This encourages a more relaxed informal atmosphere where the audience can hear and get to

PREVIEW

know the performing artist better.

Seating is limited. If you would like to attend this concert, call 1-810-375-2513. Tickets are \$8, and the Doolittles will send you a map and directions to the concert.

Appearing with Tom Lewis is Cecelia Webster of Union Lake. Lovers of fine Hammered Dulcimer and Harp have long recognized her technical mastery and innovative artistry. She has a style all her own — rich in harmony counterpoint and dramatic flourishes — a style born in a foundation of classical piano,

joined with her love of historical and traditional music.

Webster has performed from California to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and extensively throughout the Midwest. Her enthusiastic approach to performing, teaching and workshops has delighted thousands of music lovers and inspired hundreds of dulcimer and harp students.

Currently, Webster is a musician on staff at Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village in Dearborn, where she is a regular performer, and conducts classes and workshops. She is also in-house harpist at the Townsend Hotel in Birmingham.

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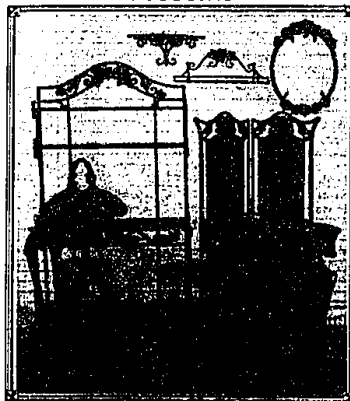
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