

Meadow Brook Theatre presents "A Christmas Carol" through Dec. 27 at the theater on the campus of Oakland University in Rochester. Call (810) 377-3300 for tickets or Ticketmaster (810) 645-6666.



**BARBARA MICHALS** for a big treat at Meadow Brook Theatre this year where their current production of this annual staple is fresh, lively and totally appealing.

The difference is a new adaptation of the Charles Dickens classic by Geoffrey Sherman, Meadow Brook's artistic director who so far has scored three in his first season.

Large doses of comedy and magic tricks and a dash of audience participation have been added to enliven the heavy Victorian melodrama without losing its essence or diluting the power of Dickens's moralistic tale.

- Dickens himself, played with enormous charm and aplomb by Richard Schrot, is an ever-present on-stage narrator who adds a lot of the comedy. Since Dickens was an amateur magician, he also performs lots of magic tricks that nicely underscore the theatrical magic of the main story.

Asking audience members for a show of hands if they already know the plot, Schrot plays on this familiarity, encouraging the spectators to interact with the cast at some spots.

For example, when Scrooge (Phillip Locker) is unable to see the Spirit of Christmas Past lurking in the shadows, Schret becomes a cheerleader urging the audience to scream "Behind you! Behind you!" to the actor. A bit corny, but it really works.



**Classic tale:** Richard A. Schrot (left to right), Phillip Locker and Thomas D. Mahard perform in Meadow Brook Theatre's production of "A Christmas Carol."

## REVIEW

However, there are two young actors assigned to each child's role, and the program gives no help.

The entire supporting cast of Londoners, both young and old, are delightfully animated throughout. Diane Von Fossen is especially amusing as the staid old maid Carolyn, courted ineptly by the drunken Topper (Richard Marjott).

Peter Hicks's revolving set and Barbara Jenks's Victorian costumes are top-notch. Sherman's very fine direction brings all the humor and pathos together with admirable skill so that any modern-day Scrooge leaves the theater feeling merry and uplifted in spite of his natural inclinations.

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

All of the many youngsters in the cast perform with remarkable polish. The lad playing Tiny Tim limped across the stage most convincingly with a brace and crutch.

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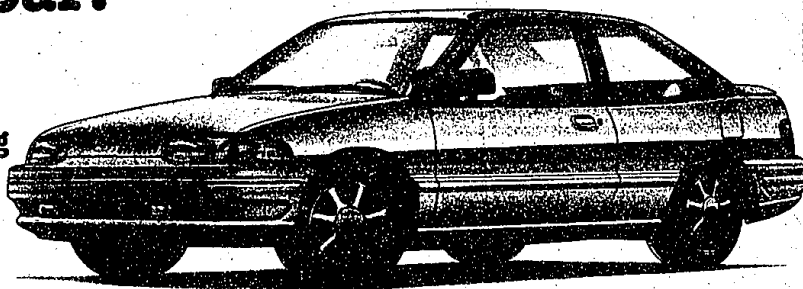
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