

THE WEEK AND

FRIDAY



Twenty-two year old pianist Terrence Wilson performs with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra led by Neeme Jarvi, 8 p.m. at Orchestra Hall, Detroit. Tickets range from \$42 to \$17 (box seats \$60), (313) 833-3700.

SATURDAY



Sixteen of the world's best monster trucks go head to head at the U.S. Hot Rod Monster Jam at Pontiac Silverdome. Gates open 5:30 p.m., show starts 7:30 p.m. Tickets \$12 in advance, \$14 day of the show, (248) 645-6666.

SUNDAY



University Musical Society presents Christopher Parkening in "A Celebration of Andres Segovia," 4 p.m. at Rackham Auditorium, Rackham Building, Ann Arbor. Tickets \$20-\$32, (734) 764-2538.



Hot Tip: See what's new on wheels at the 1998 International North American International Auto Show Saturday, Jan. 19, at Cobo Center, downtown Detroit. Tickets \$8 adults, \$4 seniors (65 and over), children (12 and under) free when accompanied by an adult, available at the door or call (248) 645-6666.

Bluesy: Marvell Thunder (Luray Cooper) is after the heart and guitar of Glory (Keesha Flieth) in Meadow Brook Theatre's production of "Thunder Knocking on the Door."



■ **What:** "Thunder Knocking on the Door," a musical written by Keith Glover and directed by Gary Anderson. Original music by Keb' Mo', Anderson Edwards and Keith Glover

■ **When:** Continues through Sunday, Feb. 1. Performances 8 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 2 p.m. Wednesday, Saturday & Sunday; 6:30 p.m. Sunday. Opening night - 6 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 10.

■ **Where:** Meadow Brook Theatre, Wilson Hall on the campus of Oakland University, Rochester Hills.

■ **Tickets:** Range from \$18-\$26.50; (248) 377-3300; group sales, (248) 370-3316.

■ **Cast:** Marlon M. Bailey (Jaguar, Jr.), Charley Clark (Good Slater), Luray Cooper (Marvell Thunder), Herb Downer (Dregster), Keesha Flieth (Glory)

STORY BY FRANK PROVENZANO

bluesy parable resounds to the heavens

Feelin' like you've been steamrolled by a tyrannical boss, cast aside by a vindictive lover or left by the side of the road like a tossed leather shoe on the Southfield Freeway?

And that's a good day. Maybe feelin' jinxed by a sadistic god who throws wild curves and builds unsurmountable slippery slopes?

That ain't merely bad luck or divine diplomacy gone wrong. Them's the blues.

Showing a resilient heart, too-tappin' rhythm and plenty of grit, Meadow Brook Theatre elevates the plight of the blues to a mesmerizing parable in its latest production, "Thunder Knocking on the Door," which opens for previews this Wednesday.

"It's really a love story with blues music," said Geoffrey Sherman, artistic director of Meadow Brook Theatre.

Through allegory and bluesy melody, however, the lessons wrought from the parable are clearly based in the present.

The fantasy musical, written by Alabaman Keith Glover with songs by Grammy Award-winner Keb' Mo', was originally commissioned by the Alabama Shakespeare Festival in conjunction with the Center Stage in Baltimore and the Dallas Theatre Center.

To enhance the fable, Meadow Brook's scenic designer Peter Hicks has devised an abstract set to include four on-stage blues musicians, who sit, strum and pick as easily as rocking on

a front porch on a cool Alabama evening. With earth-tones and a rough-hewn structure made from logs, Hicks has created a crossroads where the blues meets salvation.

While the play is still "in development" with songs and dialogue expected to be rewritten right up until opening night, Sherman and playwright Glover hope the musical will soon show signs of being on its way to a New York production.

A common myth

The circumstances in "Thunder" take on a mythic dimension. It's a familiar story found in various cultures. Basically, "Thunder" is a parable about challenging the devil incarnate through a competitive game of who's better, with the earth-bound mortal at risk of losing his soul.

But foremost, "Thunder" is an entertaining love story, said Director Gary Anderson. Without melodrama or over-the-top

rhetoric, Anderson has shaped the work into melodic appreciation of blues music. It's not, he said, a play strictly about the African-American experience.

"Thunder" begins with the legendary accomplishments of the tale's patron saint, blues guitarist Jaguar Dupree, who once "outlicked" the supernatural Marvell Thunder.

Time has gone by, but the bitterness over being outlicked has hardly diminished for Marvell Thunder.

So, Thunder challenges the next best thing to the late Dupree. He throws down the gauntlet to Dupree's son, Jaguar Dupree Jr., and daughter, Glory, a sightless slick-playing bluesmith who's part Blind Lemon Jefferson and part howling Sadie McKinney.

Junior, whose blues are more bravado than inspiring, is easy pickings for the cagey Thunder. In the dual of "my blues are badder than yours," Thunder easily wins the guitar that

Jaguar Dupree made for his son. But if it's easy, it ain't the blues.

So, Thunder aims for Glory. Perhaps a case where the metaphor is just a bit too obvious. But then, maybe, the banal doesn't matter if the blues ring true.

It's time to let their blues do the talking. And Glory's got some case.

But first, the wager with Thunder has to inspire the kind of anxiety needed to fuel any deep-seated blues. The deal: if Glory wins, she regains her sight and Thunder turns to stone. If she loses, well, having the blues is going to seem like a holiday.

Ultimately, Meadow Brook hopes the Thunder-Glory confrontation will inspire audiences to slap a knee, bite a dog, kick the devil and sing, "Now I'm gonna give you my blues."

And when the catharsis known as blues music has run its course another message may linger.

Other side of the street

"Thunder" shows our audience what happens on the other side of the street," said Sherman, who served as artistic director at the Hudson Guild Theatre, an Off Broadway playhouse in New York City before joining Meadow Brook last season.

The "other side" of the street isn't across the subdivision.

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MUSIC

T-Bonist Bugs Beddow blows the blues

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

Trombone players Glenn Miller and Tommy Dorsey made music history. Fellow t-bonist/flutist Doug "Bugs" Beddow wanted to make an impression as well when forming the Bugs Beddow Band.

"I saw Bob Weeber, leader of the (Detroit blues band) Regular Boys and I think that's great, a trombone player leading a band. I wanted to leave a mark. Glenn Miller and Tommy Dorsey, they were leaders of their bands and they were trombone players," Beddow said.

The hard-working five-piece band is making its mark locally with the trombone-driven originals, cookin' covers, and the comedic interludes and party atmosphere of its live shows.

"Our style is trombone-driven party blues with plenty of vocals,

horns and dancing. Everybody in the band sings lead. I pass the spotlight around quite often," Beddow said.

Bugs Beddow Band shows revolve around humor. Executive producer and marketing director Gary Quill wears a Bugs Beddow T-shirt and strolls around shows selling the band's six CDs. When the burly Quill hits the floor, the band yells out "We're giving them away," pauses and says "for money."

The Bugs Beddow Band's shows include originals and covers such as "Leave Your Hat On" by Randy Newman, "Pontiangone" by Mojo Nixon, "One Way Out" by Allan Brown, "Cheap Sunglasses" by ZZ Top, and "Unchain My Heart" by Ray Charles, all of which are found on its latest CD "Bone Appetit Tour: Live at the 1997 Mid-Michigan Blues Festival." The album,

Beddow's sixth, was recorded in Fenton for the syndicated radio show "House of Blues."

"We didn't intend for the recording to be an album at the time. The band was playing with a lot of gusto, and that's the essence of the band. But you hear the band now, and we love the album away. The band is so tight. That and the timing of the comedic interludes are a lot better now."

The "Bone Appetit Tour" CD is available through Bugs Beddow's website, <http://www.bugsbeddow.com>, Harmony House stores and Big Whale CDs, 2859 Orchard Lake Road (between Cass Elizabeth Lake and Middlebelt roads) in Keego Harbor. The Orchard Lake-based Bugs Beddow Band wrapped up its 1997

■ Who: Bugs Beddow Band

■ **What:** Performs in support of its "Gimme Five Tour"

■ **When:** 9:30 p.m.-1:30 a.m. Friday, Jan. 16-Saturday, Jan. 17

■ **Where:** Beale Street Blues, 8 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. Clear Shows, (810) 206-0590.

■ **How:** There is a \$2 cover charge. Only those 21 and older will be admitted. Call (248) 334-7900 for more information.

OTHER BUGS SHOWS:

• 9:30 p.m.-1:30 a.m. Friday, Jan. 23-Saturday, Jan. 24, at the Blue Goose, 28911 Jefferson Ave., St. Clair Shores, (810) 206-0590.

• 6:30-8 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 3, during a Black Entertainment Television event at the Museum of African American History, 315 E. Warren, Detroit, (313) 494-5800.

• 8:30 p.m.-12:30 a.m. Friday, Feb. 13-Saturday, Feb. 14, at the Fox and Hounds restaurant, 1560 N. Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Hills, (248) 644-4800.

For more information about upcoming Bugs Beddow gigs visit its website at <http://www.bugsbeddow.com> or call (248) 546-BUGS.



"Gimme Five": Doug "Bugs" Beddow, center, describes the sound of the Bugs Beddow Band as "trombone-driven party blues."

Please see **BUGS**, E2