

THEATER

Farmington Players continues season with 'The Heiress'

Farmington Players presents "The Heiress" by Ruth and Augustus Goetz, 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, Feb. 6, 7, Feb. 13, 14, Feb. 20, 21, Feb. 27, 28, and 8 p.m. Thursdays, Feb. 26, 27, 28, and 22 at the Players Barn, 32332 W. 12 Mile Road (1/2 mile west of Orchard Lake Road), Farmington Hills. Tickets \$5, call (248) 653-2955.

BY KERRY WYONIA
STAFF WRITER

Based on the novella "Washington Square" by Henry James, "The Heiress" is made-for-movie material.

William Wyler's film version of "The Heiress" made in 1949, starred Olivia De Havilland and Montgomery Clift. De Havilland won an Oscar for her performance of Catherine Sloper, a plain rich woman who is sought after by a fortune hunter played by Clift. The 1949 film version was adapted from the 1947 Broadway play by Ruth and Augustus Goetz.

"Washington Square," which played at metro Detroit movie theaters last year, was more closely based on the novel by James.

"We are going back to the original source, to the novel, for our movie," said producer Julie Bergman Sender. "One of the things that's good about novels that last a long time is that there are many ways to interpret them."

Playgoers will have the opportunity to see how Farmington Players interprets the story of "The Heiress," when it opens Friday at the Players Barn.

"It's an old classic," said Emily McSweeney who is directing the show. "It's a real challenge for the actors to put themselves in the clothing and try to present the aura of 1850s New York, to transport the audience back to make them believe they're there. It's a bit of history and nostalgia."

The setting is 1850 New York

City. Plain, shy Catherine Sloper is courted by fortune hunter Morris Townsend. Her Aunt Penman tries to move the courtship along, while Catherine's embittered father, Dr. Austin Sloper, tries to end the affair.

"There's nothing in this show that is off color," said McSweeney. "Our audiences tend to like that. It's more of a melodrama, you have to think about it a little."

Capturing the feel of the period was a challenge behind the scenes too for Cynthia Tupper, president of the Farmington Players, and the other women who made the costumes.

"Not everyone in the audience will know how accurate it is, but we know," said Tupper. "We spent over 150 hours making costumes and researching the period for authenticity."

A theater instructor from Wayne State University met with the cast to discuss the etic-

quette and social background of the era. "She talked about the way people related to one another, the right way to take off your gloves," said Tupper. "The costumes were really made from nothing. We had a few vintage pieces that were restored."

The Farmington Players tries to offer its members a variety of theatrical experiences. Anyone can audition for a part.

"We thought it would be a real challenge to do a period piece," said Tupper. "We haven't done one for awhile. It's a very interesting play, one the Players haven't done before, and Emily was very interested in directing it."

The Players are also getting some help from students at Marian High School in Bloomfield Hills.

"They presented it in December," said McSweeney. "They'll be taking the show to national competition in Nebraska this summer. They were the second of 10



Drama: Hank Bennett of Farmington Hills (left to right), Kathleen Monticello of Redford, and Marge Wetzel of Farmington rehearse for the Farmington Players production of "The Heiress."

schools in the United States chosen to compete. We're been swapping ideas."

The students were invited to help with the Farmington Players production. "It's another bridge in the community," said

McSweeney. "We've shared ideas about sound and light design, set pieces and props."

For the audience, McSweeney said, "The Heiress" should be an interesting evening of theater.

Violinist from page E1

before me was Russian."

Kerr joked that his contract requires him to "make an effort to speak Dutch." He said he's picked up some of the language and has all the musical terms down so he can get through rehearsals.

And the marriage?

"I'm apologizing to my wife every day, our lives are in such hectic chaos," he said.

Kerr was invited to audition for the orchestra three weeks before the wedding and his new bride had to adjust to starting married life in Holland.

"It's a big strain. But it's exciting for a new couple to go on a journey, move to a new country, experience Europe," Kerr said.

Still, the music has been worth the inconveniences. The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra under the direction of Riccardo Chailly has been receiving rave reviews for its concerts and its recordings.

Founded in 1888, the orchestra takes its name from the acoustically acclaimed concert hall in which it regularly performs ("God's instrument," says Kerr). The orchestra has won renown for its performance of late 19th century and post-Romantic works including the music of Brahms, Mahler, Bruckner and Richard Strauss. Many famous composers have been guest conductors for the orchestra or have written explicitly for it.

The orchestra will perform Bruckner's unfinished Symphony No. 9 in D minor and a Mahler tone poem, "Totenfeier," in Ann Arbor. At other venues on the monthlong tour, the orchestra will perform Mahler's Symphony No. 5 in D-sharp minor, which has just been released as a CD on Decca/London. The orchestra has a long association with Mahler and the Fifth Symphony, which Mahler premiered with the orchestra in 1906.

Chailly, an Italian and the orchestra's first non-Dutch conductor, has performed many 20th century works with the symphony.

"He's brought a lot of contemporary music into their repertoire," Kerr said. "It's incredible what he's done with this orchestra in the last 10 years."

But, Kerr said, the orchestra itself carries on a rich tradition. He said the spirit of Mahler and Bruckner actually seem to be present when the orchestra rehearses and performs.

Comparing the two composers, Kerr said it is often said that a Mahler symphony is like a journey up a mountain and the end is where you look around at the world below while with Bruckner you're already on top of the mountain and spend a lot of time looking around.

Kerr said the important thing about the unfinished symphony was creating the right atmosphere.

"He was a religious man," Kerr said. "This is an unfinished work, and he's seen death approaching, but somehow he's hopeful. There is a simplicity you don't find in other Bruckners."

The Concertgebouw CD of the Mahler Fifth is a dynamic, rich, beautiful production showing off the orchestra's acclaimed warm, full string section and also its pure, clear horn and woodwind sections and dramatic percus-

sion. "It's a typical Mahler fest, one of the most beautiful I know," said Kerr, who said he hadn't heard the new CD yet.

He said the symphony's famous slow *Adagio* is sublime and always associated in his mind with Leonard Bernstein

because it was played at his funeral.

"Always when I hear that I think of that, of Bernstein and of the tragedy of Mahler's life," Kerr said.

Kerr began learning violin when he was 7 years old. His mother was a concert pianist and

his father played guitar. He studied at the Juilliard and Curtis music schools.

"For me, it's more than just the music," he said. "I'd see people going off to 9 to 5 jobs every day that they didn't like and I'd say why do they do it. I play violin. I got to have fun when I work and

when I don't. The music drew me in and I couldn't live without it. ... It's a dream to play in this kind of orchestra. I wouldn't give it up."

Kerr said he wants to continue with the orchestra, teach and develop his chamber performance career.

He tries to spend at least three months in the United States. Meanwhile, he scans the World Wide Web for news from home and searches for someplace where football doesn't mean soccer.

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