

THE WEEKEND

FRIDAY



Avon Players presents "The Odd Couple," the female version 8 p.m. at the theater, 1185 Tenken Road, Rochester. Tickets \$11, (248) 608-9077.

SATURDAY



Meg (left to right, Maribeth Monroe), Lenny (Kristi Sorkin of West Bloomfield), and Babe (Kelly Komen of Livonia) star in "Crimes of the Heart," 8 p.m. at Wayne State University's Studio Theatre, 4743 Cass Ave., Detroit. Tickets \$5-\$7, call (313) 577-2972.

SUNDAY



See the musical "Cats," at the Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Performances 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Tickets \$17.50-\$42.50, call (248) 433-1515.



Hot Tip: Discover Stars on Ice features Scott Hamilton, Kristi Yamaguchi, Katarina Witt, Ekaterina Gordeeva, Torvill and Dean, and others, 8 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 28, at The Palace of Auburn Hills, 2 Championship Dr. (I-75 and Lapeer Road), Auburn Hills. Tickets \$42 and \$30, call (248) 377-0100.



Artists at work: Playwright Paul Kittinger, 14 and director Matthew Ripper discuss Kittinger's one-act play, "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Africa."

Festivals bring original one-act plays to life

BY KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER

Seeing what started out as little keys on his keyboard jumping up and down on stage is a thrill, and Paul Kittinger of Farmington Hills can't wait for opening night.

His one-act play, "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Africa," is one of four original plays being presented during the Theater Guild of Livonia/Redford's Festival of One-Act Plays opening Friday, March 6.

"I wrote a lot," said Kittinger, 14, a ninth grader at Harrison High School in Farmington Hills. "I started out writing short stories, and then started writing more."

He describes the storyline of his play as kind of an Odd Couple story about two college roommates getting ready to go to Africa on a study program.

Celebrations of one-act plays

■ Heartland Theatre One-Act Play Slam - 7-11 p.m. Monday, March 2, at The Cadieux Cafe, 4377 Cadieux (1.5 miles east of I-94 on Cadieux). General admission \$5 at the door. Writer's Admission and Entrance Fee \$10, limit one play per writer, call (248) 988-1094, Ext. 2 for information.

■ A Festival of One-Act Plays - presented by the Theatre Guild of Livonia/Redford, 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, March 6-7; March 13-14; 2 p.m. Sunday, March 8 and March 15, at the theater, 15139 Beech Daly (south of Five Mile Road), Redford. Tickets \$10, \$1 discount for students and seniors, call (313) 531-0554.

■ The 3rd Level Improv Troupe: Performs at Joe's Comedy Club, 8 p.m. Sun. days (free). The group will headline at the club above Kicker's All American Grill, 35071 Plymouth Road, Livonia, Thursday, March 12 (free), and Friday-Saturday, March 13-14 (\$10). Performances 8 p.m. Thursday, 8 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. Friday-Saturday, call (734) 261-0555 for information, or (313) 438-1381 for information about The 3rd Level.

■ Totally Unlearned Theatre performs at Big Red's Comedy Club, Friday-Saturday, Feb. 27-28, inside Mr. B's Roadhouse, 595 N. Lapeer Road (M-24), Oxford. Performances 9 p.m. Friday, 8 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. Saturday. Admission \$10 per person, call (248) 628-6500.

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"There have been minor edits for clarity. It's amazing. One rainy Saturday I was typing up this short play, and then I was watching people read and audition for parts I wrote."

Ripper is also enjoying working with Kittinger. "You don't give him credit for the amount of insight he has. Some of his plays on words were very intelligent. He's easy to work with because he learning. He gets my feedback, but you don't want to overstep him, because he wrote the play."

Patricia Feldt is also a new playwright whose work "The Town Meeting" was selected for the festival.

"I can't wait to see the real thing," she said. Her story takes place at a town meeting. The town has inherited some money, and there are stipulations. They must decide how to spend it at a town meeting. Each person builds a case for their needs, the meeting doesn't end until midnight.

"The idea just sort of came to me," said Feldt, the mother of nine children ranging in age from 4 to 21. "From the time I was little I loved to tell stories. They were just in there."

Feldt started writing plays in 1995 when her parish Our Lady of Loretto in Redford decided to script their own mystery dinner theater. The next year she expanded on the characters, writing more about them.

"Once I got started, it got me thinking, I'd like to write, it awakened my creative writing talent."

Last year, she wrote most of the script for the Our Lady of Loretto mystery dinner theater. "Once the characters got more detailed, it was harder for people. I could write six or seven pages about them where others struggled."

In the fall she attended her first play "Mousetrap" at the Theatre Guild of Livonia/Redford playhouse. "I was amazed at the talent," she said. "As soon as I walked in the theater I said, 'I've got to get involved, this is great.'"

She submitted a one-act play for the festival, and truly expected one of those thanks, but no thanks letters.

"I got the news they were going to do my play on Christmas Eve," she said. "It was like a Christmas present."

At the theater, Feldt is content to stay in the background, observing and learning. "It was just amazing to me, I didn't have any preconceived ideas of what the characters would be like. It's very exciting to see characters come to life."

She applauds her director, Rob Papineau. "He's great at character development," she said. "Even if his ideas differ from my own, I'm having so much fun with this."

With nine children, Feldt either has to get up real early or stay up late.

Please see ONE-ACT, E2

Down Riverdance has no dancing, isn't even Irish

BY KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER

"Down Riverdance," is the name of The Second City - Detroit's 12th revival, but the show, which opens tonight, has nothing to do with "Riverdance" and Irish dancing.

"It's something clever that we came up with," said Rico Bruce Wade, Second City - Detroit's new executive producer. It's the tradition of Second City - Detroit to pick titles for shows that don't necessarily relate to content, but to hot topics of the day.

Not wanting to give anything away, Wade said "Riverdance" takes many different looks at relationships in today's society, and provides "our take on corporate culture - what it's like to be in a pressure cooker, and why we're gravitating toward cigar bars and the retro look; why we've become attracted to the rat pack generation."

Wade, well known to fans from his Mainstage acting days, April 1995 to February 1997, isn't the only newcomer.

Mary Jane Pories, formerly with the touring company, joins veterans Larry Campbell, Margaret Exner, Catherine Worth, Keegan-Michael Key, Eric Black, and Brandon Johnson, on the Mainstage. Marc Evan Jackson is the new musical director, and Michael Gellman the new resident director.

Wade is excited about his new role. "I have the sensibility of an actor, and the welfare of an actor in mind," he said. "I want to provide a nurturing environment when ideas are exchanged freely. The majority of ideas never make it into our skits, that's why it's necessary that we hear all ideas, they are hidden gems."

Like everything else, Second City - Detroit builds their shows from scratch.

"Someone says 'I have an idea' this is where it begins," said Wade. "Sometimes something will happen spontaneously on stage."

Wade also wants to educate his audience, especially those who are disappointed. "They come expecting to see

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FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT

Disney on Ice - Hercules

■ When: Tuesday, March 3, through Sunday, March 8. Performances 7:30 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday; 11 a.m. Thursday; 11:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Saturday; 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. Sunday.

■ Where: Joe Louis Arena, 600 Civic Center Dr., Detroit.

■ Tickets: \$17.50, \$14.50, and \$11.50 with limited \$30 non-discounted outside seats. (248) 645-6666 or visit the Ticketmaster website www.ticketmaster.com

■ Ticket discounts: Save \$5 on tickets Tuesday, March 3; save \$3.50 on tickets Wednesday, March 4; kids under 12 save \$2 on tickets 11 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. Saturday, March 7. For more information, call Olympia Entertainment customer information, (313) 983-6600.

Disney's 'Hercules' an ice show of heroic proportions

BY KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER

Ten headed Hydra is a monster, but audiences love this 20-foot tall menacing beast who comes to life in Disney on Ice - Hercules.

"The kids really get into seeing Hydra up so close," said Mitch Matsunaga, assistant company manager of the show opening March 3 at Joe Louis Arena. Part inflatable balloon, part hydraulics, Hydra fights back each time Hercules cuts off one of his 10 heads, and grows another one.

"It's the most threatening and realistic monster that we've ever created," said Mark Fredinos, scenic coordinator. "He's quick, and since he's always moving, the

Hydra never blocks the view of the audience."

Like the movie Hercules, Disney on Ice - Hercules, presented by Feld Entertainment, is a high energy, fast-paced show with upbeat music.

"We follow the movie as closely as we can," said Matsunaga. "We're trying to bring a story to life on ice."

Hades, a fast-talking heathen, isn't very happy with his underworld assignment, so he hatches a plan to unleash the Titans and rock Zeus off of Mount Olympus. Strongman Hercules stands in his way.

On the road to prove himself a hero worthy of the gods, Hercules hooks up with Phil, a foisty entry who's a first-rate trainer, and Pegasus, the winged

wonder horse. Along the way he falls for a sassy lass named Meg.

An international cast of 19 male and 21 female skaters, representing 11 countries, including the United States, Canada, Sweden and Japan, tells the story of Hercules.

"They're fantastic skaters," said Matsunaga. "They can jump, spin and act."

Hercules focuses on Mount Olympus, celestial home of gods and goddesses. "It's a tremendous center set piece," said Matsunaga. "It's four scenes in one."

Self-propelled Mount Olympus rises 26 feet off the ice, and rotates to reveal other scenes including Hades' habitat, and the city of Thebes.

Please see HERCULES, E2



Ice spectacular: Strongman Hercules falls for the feisty Meg in Disney on Ice - Hercules.