

## THEATER

## Village Players serve up a superb 'Dining Room'

The Village Players production of A.R. Gurney's "The Dining Room," continues 8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday at the Playhouse, 752 Chestnut St., Birmingham. Adult tickets are \$12, students \$10, available at the door or by calling (248)644-2075. BY HELEN ZUCKER SPECIAL WRITER

The Village Players production of A.R. Gurney's "The Dining Room," directed by Jane Pfeiffer and Joan Reddy, is superb. The talented cast of six lob Gurney's funny, poignant lines across the 1898 "Made in Virginia" table with an intense sense of theater. Linda Hammell is marvelous. She opens the play as a bright real estate agent and quickly dissolves into a proper mother, a girl who'd rather see "Saint Joan" with her maiden aunt than go to debate parties, a palsied, but still-with-it maid, a child at a birthday party and four other women living through various stages in the lives of



The Dining Room: Village Players cast members, left tonight, Eric Kent Franz of Beverly Hills, Linda Hammell of Lathrup Village, Jeanine Matlow of Farmington Hills, Pete DiGiorgio of Birmingham, Maureen Cook of Birmingham and Gary Sekerak of Beverly Hills.

upper middle class WASPs. Hammell brings great energy, grace and a sense of comedy to

her roles.

Gary Sekerak lends solidity and presence to his roles as the

client who wants the house, the psychiatrist who outwits his architect who wants to knock out

the walls, the lover Ted, and eight men who move from the 1900s to the present. Sekerak is moving as the son who nods and watches finches as his pompous father tells him, Polonius fashion, how to "do" his funeral.

Eric Kent Franz is very light on his feet and turns in strong performances as various children, the zippy architect, the nephew from Amherst who photographs his aunt and her fingerbowl for an anthropology project at Amherst, Stundish, the clubman and others.

Jeanine Matlow glows whether she's playing an Irish maid who leaves for a factory, a child at a birthday party, a teen who doesn't drink; she's especially fine as an elderly mother who's lost her memory and as a trouble daughter who wants to come home but can't.

Maureen Cook exudes radiant intelligence as a rattled mother, the aunt who knows about fingerbowl, china and glassware, a cook who can make butterballs and a woman who perpetually

needs a drink. Cook has a restraint about her, as though she had reserves to call on. She seems to be upholding WASP traditions quite on her own. Cook has a large gift.

Pietro DiGiorgio is an immensely lively father, and many others. He's especially fine as the grandfather who bought the dining room table, the self-made man who tells his grandson, "You can go to St. Luke's, your brother can have a car, your sister can go to Europe, but an Irish or Jewish gentleman will be where I am, and your grandchildren will be back at the plow." DiGiorgio brings zest to the role of the father who writes his funeral service, delight to every role he plays.

David Hoff and Steve Tadevic's set is marvelous. Kudos to the construction crew and to props. Julie McGee's costumes were clever. Producers Andrea M. and Vicki Kaptur and Ellie Pierce did a bangup job. Tickets are 1/2 price on Thursday, Feb. 26.

## MUSIC

## Band works hard to make their CDs worth the price



CHRISTINA FUOCO

An avid music fan, Our Lady Peace singer Raine Maida is tired of paying \$18 for a CD and then finding out that there's only a few good songs on it. "All these acts, you hear one song and you go away. Everything seems to be quite disposable. It's like fast food. I can get really angry about it," Maida explained.

"I think I'm a music fan first but there's only three or four records that I've loved this year. Eighteen dollars for a CD - it's not worth it."

One solution to the problem is recording onto a cassette tape the good songs from lackluster CDs and then selling the CDs back to a used record store. That is something that scares Maida. "That's our greatest fear - ending up on a mix tape," Maida said with a laugh.

In order to avoid making a mediocre, disposable album, Maida and his band - guitarist Mike Turner, drummer Jeremy Taggart and bassist/keyboardist Duncan Coutts - "worked hard on making an album that you can listen to all the way through."

"We really wanted to create a unique vibe for each song. The first 10 seconds takes you to a different place automatically. That enables you to listen to the whole record," explained Maida of Our Lady Peace's second album "Clumsy" (Columbia).

Each of the hit singles on "Clumsy" carries that personality. "Superman's Dead" kicks off with an acoustic guitar before charging into Maida's wailing. On "Automatic Flowers" Maida whispers "doo-doo doo doo doo, doo doo doo" with the accompaniment of stripped-down drums. A few notes of a piano lead into the title track.

"We're taking you on a pseudo-musical journey where there's these new songs coming at you. It's not just one long song. We

just hate to have, in terms of production, stuff that for whatever reason becomes stale by the third or fourth song."

Maida attributes the waterfall of creativity to its studio and its new record label. The band recorded "Clumsy" with the same producer, Arnold Lanni, who worked on its debut "Naveed" (Relativity).

"It was not a fancy studio. It was more like a clubhouse. For us it's about creativity rather than somebody doing your laundry and having a shift on the premises. We had other people trying to push other producers or different studios in New York or Los Angeles on us but we stuck

with what works."

While on tour, the Toronto-based band is writing new material for the follow-up to "Clumsy," which was released April 11, 1997.

"We're taping soundchecks right now. We write as much as we can."

Our Lady Peace's tour will hit Clutch Cargo's in Pontiac on Friday, March 6, along with Headswim and Black Lab, a band that is experiencing success in its own right with the single "Wash It Away." Like most of the songs on Black Lab's debut "Your Body Above Me" (DGC), there's a sense of urgency in singer Paul Durham's vocals.

"The characters in my songs are immersed in trying to find some redemption, usually from the experience of loss," he explained. "They are trying to find some meaning in it, find resolution and transcendence - sometimes succeeding, sometimes failing."

Our Lady Peace, Black Lab and Headswim perform Friday, March 6, at Clutch Cargo's, 65 E. Huron, Pontiac. Doors open at 7

p.m. for the all-ages show. Tickets are \$15. For more information, call (248) 333-3362 or <http://www.961mail.com>.

If you have a question or comment for Christina Fuoco write her at The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 30251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia, Mich., 48150, or via e-mail at [cfuoco@aol.com](mailto:cfuoco@aol.com), or leave a message at (734) 953-2045, ext. 2130.

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