Village Players' nostalgic romp a melodious ride

The Village Players of Birmingham presents "Bye Bye Bye Bride," 2 pm. Sunday, May 3; 8 pm. Friday-Saturday, May 8: 9, 752 Chestnut, two blocks south E: Maple off of Woodward Avenue, Tickete: \$14, eneral; \$12, students/seniors; (248) 644-

As presented by the Village Players of Birmingham, the musical comedy, Bye Bye

Birdie, takes off in its opening moments, leading playgoers on a nostalgic romp through the late

There are ponytails, toreador There are ponytails, toreador pants and sereming, swooning funs of the teen idel Conrad Birdie, who is about to be drafted into the U.S. Army. Directed by Dan Gastle, this rendition of the venerable musi-cal by Charles Strouse and Lee Adams entertains delightfully from start to finish.

Credit goes to a large, energet-ic cast, many of them children. Thanks to Castle's savvy direc-tion, each actor seems on the mark, from the youngest mem-bers of the endearingly comic

bers of the enceating; coinciders.

Performers in leading roles seem especially well-cast. As Albert, who yearns for songwriting fame and fortune at the same time that he yearns for love, morringe and a job as an English teacher, the pleasant-

voiced Y. Junic Mintry seems appropriately torn and befulded.

Grubor is not only cute as pie, she also knows how to deliver a some production peripherals go far toward making this show the success that it is. Costumes and sweetheart, who aspires to be his misses, Tracy Schick is not only telented but possess a kind of subtly commanding stage presence.

In the role of Kim, the Sweet Apple, Ohio, teer-ager who will share 'One Last Kiss' with Conrad (on the Ed Sullivan, plus the utterly winning 'Put on a three and to the Ed Sullivan, plus the utterly winning 'Put on any flow proved in the form of the short white gloves to the fight of the short white gloves to the short white gloves to the short white gloves to the provided in the provided in the short white gloves to the fight of the short white gloves to the fight of the short white gloves to the fight of the short white gloves to the goal of the short white gloves to

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formance," said Sara Billmann. "We had the vision of bringing it to the Detroit Opera House after its 1996 world premiere at the Power Center.'

Four times as many people will be able to see it at the Detroit Opera House since the Power Center seats about 1,300 people.

UMS has tripled the number of dance and movement-based events this year.

The series begins Sept. 11 in the Huron River with seating on the banks of the river, and in Nichols Arboretum. Movement Artists Eiko and Koma will pre-sent "River."

"Ît starts an hour after sundown and ends in complete dark-ness," said Billmann. "There are underwater cameras."

"River" is the final piece of a three-part "Environmental Trilo-gy," which includes "Wind" and "Land." Eiko and Koma, Japanese born denecr-choreopri-phers are married and live in New York City where they live and teach. and teach.

and teach.

Another season highlight is a
Jożz Tap Summit An All-Star
Celebration of Tap Dancing featuring tap legends Jimmy Slyde
and Dinnne Walker with
Lufvaughn Robinson, Germaine
Ligram, Brends Bufalion, members of the American Tap
Orthestra and special guest
Ygette Glover, Nov. 7 at Hill

Auditorium.

There's also a big focus on Russian composers this year in the classical series. The St. Petersburg Philharmonic led by Uri Temirkanov with guest violinist Gidon Kremer will present a program of works by Liadov, Shostakovich and Prokofiev Oct. 10 at Hill Auditori

Budapest Festival Orchestra, Ivan Fischer, conductor, Andras Schiff, piano, presents an all Russian program featuring works by Stravinsky, and Bartok Oct. 24 at Hill Auditorium.

Kirov Orchestra of St. Peters-berg, Valery Gergiev conductor presents the concert version of Tchaikovsky's "The Nuteracker," on Nov. 2.

on Nov. 2.

UMS salutes the 100th birthday of George Gershwin Sept. 27
in a concert featuring Michael
Tilson Thomas and the San
Francisco Symphony at Hill
Auditorium. The program
includes "Rhapsody No. 2 for
Piano and Orchestra," and "An
American in Paris."

Combulor Support

American in Paris.
Gershwin: Sung and Unsung —
New York Festival of Song, Dana
Hanchard, soprano, Ted Keegan,
tenor, Steven Blier and John
Musto, piano will be presented
Jan, 9 at Lydin Mendelssohn
Theatre. "Porgy and Bess Suite
for Two Pianos." Lady Be Good!
Suite for Two Pianos, and rare,
unpublished songs from the

BIRMINGHAM

Library of Congress are on the

Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis salutes the Duke in a "Centennial Cele-bration of Duke Ellington," on April 23 at Hill Auditorium.

April 23 at Hill Auditorium.

This is one of our best song-recital sories ever, said Bill-mann. Highlights are David Daniels, countortener and The Arcadian Academy with Nicholas McGegan, director and harpsi-chord performing Vocal Cantatas by A. Scarlatti.

Anne Sofie von Otter, mezzo soprano, Bengt Forsberg, piano and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, perform music Scandinavian Songs.

Scandinavian Songs.

When a soloist cancelled at the last minute, Ewa Podles, contralto agreed to fill in, even though she had just returned home to Warsaw. Her performance was well received, and she's returning this year with pianist Jerzy Marchwinski to present works of Chopin, Mussorgski, Schumann, Karlowicz and Lutoslawski on April 17.

"In addition wa are bestime out."

"In addition we are hosting our fifth Annual Guitar Series," said Fischer, "eighth annual Family, Series, a new series focusing on contemporary performance, which includes Eiko and Koma, as well as the continuation of the Beethoven the Contemporary' series."

Avon Players shine in musical 'Blood Brothers'

The Avon Players prisents the musical "Blood Brothers," at the playhouse, 1185 Tienken Road (1 1/4 miles east of Rochester Road) Rochester Hills, 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays through May 15; 8 p.m. Thursday, May 14, and 2 p.m. Sunday, May 3, 10, and 16. Tickets \$13, call (248) 608-9077. By May Mak Doelin BY MARY JANE DOERR

Critics claim it is one of the greatest musicals of the decade, And, everywhere Willy Russell's "Blood Brothers" has been produced in the 10 years since it has been on London's West End, there are standing ovations.

there are atanding ovations. This weekend at the Avon Playhouse in Rochester Hills, the reaction was the same. A cast that exceeds in the realm of acting, actors that become the people they portray, and singers who sing the music from their hearts, made this Avon Players show one that excels far above anything from community theater even at its best.

At the heart of the show's suc-

even at its best.

At the heart of the show's success is Leon Bydalek as Mrs.
Johnstone, a singer with a voice so rich and smooth, she stums the theater going audience with the full force of her emotional, ending ballad "Tell Me It's Not True."

True."
It is not just Englishman Russell's superbly written script. It is also the ominous spell that narrator Jeff Stillman cast from the beginning with his opening

poetic lines. His pivotal performance gives the impression of a puppeteer moving his characters around as if fate has ordained their downfall.

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"Blood Brothers' is the story of twins, Edward and Mickey, separated at birth and raised on different sides of the track, autobiographical of Russell's own working class childhood in Liverpool where the story takes place. Mrs. Johnstone has seven children and works for the childless Mrs. Lyons. When she become pregnant with twins and her husband leaves ber, in a moment of despair, she gives up one of her twins to her wealthy employer, Mrs. Lyons, played as paranoid neurotic by Jill Blazis Sloan, not deceifully as seen in other productions.

The twins meet as 10-year-olds, and are immediately drawn to each other.

Justin Morek plays Mickey as foul mouth, street wise, roughneck. Johnson Henshaw is a polished Edward in frashionable cloths with refined manners. It is a tribute to the outstanding direction of John Buirrich piat the cultural differences of their society and upbringing but girl friend Linda and brother Sammy, Stephanic Krawice and Stephen Kovalich deepen; the street-wise aspect of Mickey and his friends.

country and Act I ends with a lively ensemble "Bright New Day" when Mrs. Johnstone and her children are moved by her welfare authorities.

welfare authorities.

Inescapable is the tragic element of the characters that seems to play out their own tragic in natures. In Act II, David Padulka takes over as the 18-year-old Mickey with Tom Runsell as the college bound Edward Together they both fall in love with Linda, played by alluring Lossie Henstock. It is a love triangle with sharp edges that cut when Mickey is arrested for theft and is sent to prison. Michael Stoan's performance as Sammy gives credibility to the secone.

scene.

Musically, the score is a blend, of narratives and wonderful ballads such as "Shoes Upon the Table," "I'm Not Saying a Word and "Marilyn Monroe" and provocative ensembles such "Take a Letter Miss Jones," effectively sung by Bradley C, Pfeifer.
The plano accombaniment tively sung by Bradley C, Pleifer. In plano accompaniment: throughout the three-hour production is atmospheric and type cally performed by keyboard artists Duncan McMillan and Jennifer Roberts as part of a seven piece orchestra. Many draw correlations with "West Side Story," but "Blood Brothers" powerful ending is more dramatic than one of doom, leaving the audience to decide if we or fate govern our lives.

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stage antics, released its first full length album "Head" in April 1990.

990. Four albums followed before

Four albums followed before The Jesus Lizard, which now includes Ann Arbor drummer James Kimball, signed with Capitol and released its majorlabel debut "Shot" in 1995. Denison has performed all over the world, but last June adream of his came true, He played on the stage at Pine Knob Music Theatre. What he had hoped to be a good experience turned sour, however.

"During that show with Bush, I had equipment problems with the first or second songs. I had to stop and switch things around.

My Pine Knob debut was less than I thought it would be.

The rest of the tour with the English pop rockers proved to be successful.

They're hugely popular and play giant venues. We've done that kind of thing before. We opened for big bands like Rage Against the Machine and Ministry and stuff. The audiences are usually less into you whereas with Bush their crowd is a lot younger and less jaded, as a result we went aver fairly well with them and their crowd and that actually turned out really well.

Just returning from a tour



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