

Murder from page E1

2" and "Detecting Men"; and Doug Allyn of Montrose, author of "Dance in Deep Water."

Also signing are Chris Meehan of Grand Rapids, author of "Murder on the Grand"; Tom Sullivan of Lathrup Village, author of "The Martyring"; Elizabeth Bowman, author of "White Chocolate"; and Richard Baldwin, author of "A Lesson Plan for Dying."

"In Blacker Moments" features a middle-aged couple, Kate and Ray Fredrick. Ray is a chief of

detectives for a fictional mid-size Michigan city and Kate is his persistent wife. When a nun from the local parish is almost killed by a hit and run driver, Ray suspects deliberate foul play.

"The publisher wanted to go with a series, and I signed for a second book," Schenkel said. "But this was at the time when small publishing houses were having trouble staying afloat. Before they could publish the second one, they were out of business."

That didn't keep Schenkel from writing, but it did disillusion her about the publishing business.

"In the past authors were given a lot of help through small independents, nurtured and helped along. Murder, Mystery & Mayhem is that kind of small bookstore. Authors like myself have no place to turn," she said.

The lead characters were named after Schenkel's parents, though she said they also take

something from her and her husband.

"My husband (Roy Schenkel) likes to think he's Ray," she said. "He equates the two of them to the two of us more easily than I do."

Kate and Ray have a loving relationship based on close communication. But the book also draws on another part of Schenkel's life.

For 17 years, Schenkel was a Roman Catholic nun.

"Several of the characters in the book, the sisters, were influenced by people I had known in the convent. The Mother was very close to a person I knew, such a strong and spiritual person who influenced me a lot," she said.

Schenkel worked as a missionary in Africa but finally decided it wasn't right for her. A year

after leaving the convent, she met her husband, a widower with four children ages 6, 8, 10 and 12. Those children are now in their 30s and 40s and the Schenkels have seven grandchildren.

"I never regretted anything, they were both good decisions at the time, all part of life," she said.

Schenkel has continued to write Kate and Ray mysteries, including one set in an African mission. But her latest mystery features a very different couple in another exotic location - the Sahara.

"I like the characters of this book I'm writing better than Ray and Kate. I can be freer with them. They are not constrained," she said.

The desert setting is some-

thing that she's always found interesting.

Though she's learned a lot as a writer over the years, she hasn't been able to find another publisher. But she still enjoys the process. Knocking on the table, she said, "I don't have a problem with plots or characters, no writer's block."

Mysteries are always a challenge. "In Blacker Moments" has a complex plot that moves logically and smoothly to its conclusion and that's what Schenkel enjoys.

"Weaving plots, tucking in clues, playing fair without letting the reader know where things are going. That's what I really enjoy," she said.

She hopes when she finishes her Sahara mystery to convince another publisher that readers would enjoy it, too.

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Summer season features unaired material



ANN DELISI

If you watched through last summer, you know the drill: During our full production season - when we still have production money - we ask all of our musical guests to perform extra songs for us, even though we won't have time to air them the same week they're in the studio taping them. By the end of the season, we have a lot of music by a lot of different artists in the can. Come summertime - when we're largely exhausted our budget and can't afford the expense of full production - we can bring you previously unaired material.

Of course, we watch the wires to see who's coming back through town so that whenever possible we can tell you how to catch the artists you see on the show live at one of Detroit's great local venues. We give you completely new and updated information on our video billboards that highlight area openings and ongoing shows. And we also sprinkle in some of the past season's highlights from theater,

dance and the visual arts. So, if you're willing to take a metaphorical leap with me here, the summer season of "Backstage Pass" on Detroit Public Television is the three-dollar coffee table of television - old, new and valuable all at once.

Tonight's show kicks off the summer season in more ways than one, because tomorrow is the summer solstice. We're celebrating with musical performances from Celtic supergroup Solas and Detroit's own Rackham Symphony Choir.

When we asked the Rackham Symphony Choir to perform in our studio, we knew it would be the largest group we'd ever put on tape. The full ensemble numbers around 86, which we simply could not accommodate in our space. The choir is led by Suzanne Acton, who was wonderful about coming down to the studio in advance to speak to our director and a producer about our limitations. Suzanne brought a scaled-down version of the choir - about 30 people - who blew us away with the power and subtlety of their voices. It's no wonder this renowned local ensemble has performed with stars like Luciano Pavarotti and Elizabeth Parcells. This week, we'll show you a beautiful, previ-

ously unaired piece they performed for us, "Son Io."

Solas came into town the one time I was away for a show. What a bad week to miss! With press like "The Boston Herald" calling Solas "the first truly great Irish band to arise from America," you can bet that the station that brought you "Riverdance" was buzzing when they came in to perform.

Also on the Big Show: with "Wild" the major motion picture, "Judas Kiss" the Broadway show starring Liam Neeson, and "Gross Indecencies: the Three Trials of Oscar Wilde," the long-running off-Broadway show that was on all the critics' top ten lists. We'll hop on the bandwagon by revisiting Blair Anderson's trip to the Hilberry Theatre production of Wilde's "A Woman of No Importance," guest-directed by Antoni Cimolino from Ontario's Stratford Festival. Plus, we'll take another look at an exhibition of the African-Brazilian traditions of northeast Brazil at Wayne State's Community Arts Gallery.

All that's on "Backstage Pass," tonight at midnight, repeated tomorrow night at midnight on Detroit Public Television WDET Channel 66.

DESTINATION: CRANBROOK

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PC Frontier (Personal Computing Frontier)

June 19 & 20, Friday & Saturday 10am-5pm

Spend Father's Day Weekend with the PC Dads, two hip cowboys committed to helping less-than-techie families into computer savvy consumers. This entertaining national traveling show features the latest in computer technology - software, hardware and digital photography - all with an irreverent western show. Yeehaw!

The Wonderful Water Cycle

June 27, Saturday 10am-Noon

Discover the fascinating world of water! Learn about the water cycle and discover how water droplets are naturally recycled. Make and take your own "rainstick." Ages 5 and older. Preregistration required. Members \$4, non-members \$5.

The Robot Zoo

June 13 through September 7, 1998

National traveling summer exhibit features eight larger-than-life, robotic creatures, constructed of man-made parts. Computer interactive and hands-on displays help you discover how real animals function. This exhibit is sponsored by TIME, FANUC Robotics and Silicon Graphics.

CRANBROOK INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE

There's more to explore at Cranbrook's Gardens, nature trails, Art Museum, historic homes and picnic sites.

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Summer Youth & Teen Art Classes

The youth and teen program at the BBAC offers preschoolers through senior high school students an opportunity to study a wide variety of art offerings on a weekly basis with skilled instructors. The programs develop the skills utilized in creating art work with attention to building aesthetic awareness and creative ability. The summer session runs July 6 through August 8. The Birmingham Bloomfield Art Center is located at 1516 S. Cranbrook Rd., just north of 14 Mile in Birmingham. For further information **Call 248.644.0866**

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