

KobylW\dom\k\Editor\7-34-95-21.05 on the web: http://7dobserver.dccentdc.com/ Thursday, July 30, 1993

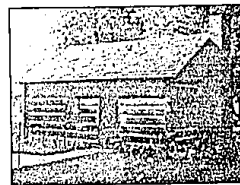
## THE WEEKEND

### FRIDAY



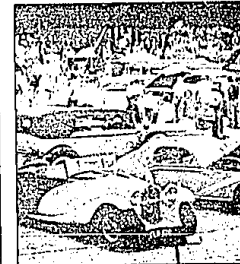
'N Sync performs 7:30 p.m. at Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. Fourth St., Royal Oak. Tickets \$17.50, call (248) 546-7610.

### SATURDAY



Visit the Carver Memorial, and learn more about African-American cultures and traditions, including the struggle for freedom, during "Celebration of Emancipation," 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Greenfield Village in Dearborn. Call (313) 271-1620 for more information.

### SUNDAY



The 20th annual Meadow Brook Hall Concours d'Elegance takes place 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on the campus of Oakland University in Rochester. Admission is \$20 adults (including a souvenir program), teens 13-17 (\$10), children 12 and under (free). Call (248) 370-3140.

### TICKET



Hot Tip: Frank Stasa III will be competing in the athletic events at the 149th Annual Highland Games, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 1 at Greenmead Historical Park, Newburgh (at Eight Mile Road), Livonia. Tickets \$8 at the gate. Children under 12 free with adult. call (313) 832-1849. See schedule inside.

### HEARTLANDE THEATRE'S

ROMANTIC COMEDY GOES FOR A KNOCKOUT MUSICAL

## A Ring of truth

Terminal romantics might consider a flourishing flower as the appropriate emotional metaphor for marriage. But those who've been around to debate the travails of raised toilet seats, the level of dirty dishes before a washing is needed, and whether in-laws should be actually considered as relatives surely know better.

Undoubtedly, the more accurate metaphor for marriage is a literal context for verbal sparring. For some, a minefield might fit the bill.

For the purposes of dramatic tit-for-tat effect, however, a boxing ring is more apropos, not to mention more practical.

Local composers Mike Vigilant and Gerry Castle, one of the most prolific songwriting duos in the region, have set to meter the excruciating joy of marriage in their new musical, "The Wedding Ring."

The play opens Thursday, Aug. 6, for a two-week run as the featured production at Heartlands Theatre Company's festival of new plays, "Playscape '98."

#### Hit by love

The entire musical takes place within the confines of a boxing ring with a matchmaker who doubles as a referee. (Every relationship should have one.)

"People can't wait to fall in love, and usually they don't know what hit them," said Vigilant of Troy, who, with partner Castle has published 12 musicals in the last nine years.

The choreography remains a skeleton of what might be seen in a full production, said Vigilant.

But apparently that won't dilute the play's message.



Still standing? Lyricist Mike Vigilant's new play, "The Wedding Ring," is a contemplation of what it takes for a marriage to succeed.



Musical comedy: Actors David Peckens (far left), Stephanie Nichols (second from right) and Danny McNie (far right) are working with director Renee Sawson (center) and stage manager Kelly MacDonald (second from left) on Heartlands Theatre's workshop production of the musical comedy "The Wedding Ring."

"The ideal is to think that all you need in any relationship is love," said Vigilant, who confesses to being a hopeless romantic.

He and partner Castle list Lennon and McCartney, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, Ira Gershwin

and Stephen Sondheim as major influences.

Vigilant was inspired to write the play after completing his master's thesis, "Divorce in Oakland County." He found that while Oakland County is one of the wealthiest areas in the country, it has one of the highest divorce rates. One of the songs in "The Wedding Ring" features a young child singing about the confusion caused by his parents' divorce.

"The question is: Can you evolve to make a commitment to a relationship? It's not that marriage is a struggle, but it's more like life is a battle," said Vigilant.

While the broader theme in "The Wedding Ring" might not be adaptable to a traditional pop songwriting format, it can be developed through a series of songs, said Vigilant.

The entire script of "The Wedding Ring" is sung, including transitions. The songs are written in major keys. They are crafted to have the immediate accessibility and familiarity of a pop song.

"Our intent is to write humable melodies with well-crafted lyrics," said Vigilant. "Lyrics make dialog stick in your head."

Excluding their foray into producing with the local blockbuster "Forever Plaid" in 1991, Vigilant and Castle have written about one

**WHAT:** "The Wedding Ring," a new musical comedy written by Mike Vigilant and Gerry Castle, directed by Renee Sawson, presented as part of Heartlands Theatre Company's Playscape '98

**WHEN:** 8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, Aug. 6-8, Friday & Saturday, Aug. 14 & 15; 9:30 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 9

**WHERE:** Meadow Brook Theatre, Oakland University campus, Rochester

**TICKETS:** \$10-\$15; Opening night 8 p.m. Aug. 6 and afterglow \$25; Staged readings, any play, \$5 suggested donation, call (248) 377-3300.

#### PLAYSCAPE '98

##### Reading Series

■ "The Pender Arrangements" by Elaine Kaiser, directed by Beth Reatost - 2 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 8

■ "Mainstream" by David MacGregor, directed by Mary Locker - 2 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 9

■ "Second Chances" by Ronald Jay, directed by Joseph Haynes - 2 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 15

■ "Bullets and Beers" by Janet Torrono Pound, directed by Dean Acheson - 2 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 16

All readings will be followed by moderated audience talk-backs

#### WORKSHOP

##### Writing for Musical Theatre

10 a.m. to noon - Saturday, Aug. 15, taught by Mike Vigilant and Gerry Castle. Cost \$10, (248) 988-1094, Ext. 1.

Please see COMEDY, E2



Featured production: American Family Theatre brings the story of "Pinocchio" to life.

## Youth theater building new audiences

When she's not breaking down walls, Laurie Wagman and her crew are busy building theater audiences for tomorrow.

"There's a fourth wall in the theater - the wall between the audience and the actors," said Wagman, founder/CEO of American Theater Arts for the Youth, Inc. and its division American Family Theater, which is bringing two shows to Meadow Brook Theatre in August - "Pinocchio," on Aug. 3 and "Wizard of Oz," on Aug. 18. "We break down the wall to engage our audience in

the wonder of theater. It's important that we reach out and grab them. You know the theater audience is getting older. We've got to capture them for audiences tomorrow. This is one of the most effective ways."

There's nothing like live theater argues Wagman, a former teacher who traded her classroom for the stage. "I'm still a teacher that uses theater, another medium of outreach. It's a great teaching tool, and it's fun."

When Wagman, whose company is based in Philadelphia,

speaks of theater, "wonder" and "magic" are words she uses to describe it.

"There's a magic connected with theater," she said. "Anyone who has a love affair with theater remembers the first play they went to as a child. There is an energy that comes out of theater. Since ancient times the theater has been used as a teaching tool and motivator."

There are a lot of lessons to be learned from classic stories like

#### On Stage

**WHAT:** American Family Theater presents:

■ "Pinocchio" - noon Monday, Aug. 3.

■ "Wizard of Oz" - noon Tuesday, Aug. 18

**WHERE:** Meadow Brook Music Festival, campus of Oakland University, Walton Boulevard and Adams Road, Rochester.

**TICKETS:** \$10 pavilion, \$5 lawn, call (248) 645-6666

Please see THEATER, E2

### BOOKS

## Musician professes love for rock and roll

By HUGH GALLAGHER

STAFF WRITER

John Covach has had rock and roll dreams ever since he was a seventh grader at Livonia's Holmes Junior High School in 1971.

"I got together with a bunch of guys in the same grade, we played athletic nights, dances for kids. Our parents had to drive us and our equipment," Covach said.

The band played on, through Battles of the Bands at Eddie Edgar Arena, Tuesday and Thursday night gigs at the junior highs during summer and on to Stevenson High School.

"Every summer we did Music Under the Stars and always played the Spree.

That went on until I graduated from high school," Covach said.

But the dream never led to stardom and Covach turned his musical interests to academia. Now, as a professor of music at the University of North Carolina, Covach is combining his scholarship with his love for rock and roll. He teaches general and technical classes in rock music and has recently edited a book of essays titled "Understanding Rock," with Graeme M. Boone (Oxford University Press).

At Stevenson High, Covach took music classes with Lowell Everson,

**WHAT:** John Covach signs his book "Understanding Rock," (Oxford University Press)

**WHERE:** Barnes & Noble Bookstore, 5110 Mile Road and Haggerty, Northville.

**WHEN:** 8 p.m. Friday, Aug. 7.

whom he credits with steering him toward a serious interest in music.

"It was a great music program at Stevenson," Covach said. "The Symphonic Choir was the top group, that was the one you wanted to get into. Because I played guitar and Mr. Everson always wanted to include some pop

tunes, that's how I got in."

At Stevenson, Covach studied music theory and composition for the first time. He worked with Everson on special projects and took special classes at

Please see MUSICIAN, E2



Teacher: John Covach combines scholarship with his love for rock and roll as a professor of music at the University of North Carolina.