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Schoolcraft.

"I stuck with the band and had no intention of being a university professor or even getting a degree," he said.

Covach dabbled in music classes at Wayne State University while trying to make it in the business. But things never jelled. Many friends went to Los Angeles with big dreams and returned without success. Also, his progressive rock style was giving way to the more stripped down punk and new wave sounds.

"At that point, I thought this life on the road wasn't right for me; I thought, do I really care what these 15-year-olds think and the answer was no," he said.

Covach went on to get a doctorate degree at the University of Michigan, with a dissertation on 12-tone music, which he had studied as a Fulbright scholar in Vienna.

But he never abandoned his rock roots.

"At the end of graduate school there was a lot of interest in popular music, but they didn't know a lot about it. There was a feeling that it could revitalize musicology. I had a history in popular music and could speak the language of academia," he said.

"Understanding Rock" was an outgrowth of those interests, though when the idea for a serious musicological study of rock was first proposed it seemed revolutionary.

"None of us was tenured at the time and we didn't know if it would be good for our careers or would hold us back. But it took five years to get it published and it's not as risky now as it was then," Covach said.

The book consists of seven essays on various aspects of rock music from a technical, musical approach. Subjects include the Grateful Dead's "Dark Star," the music of Paul Simon, the experiments of Brian Wilson and the Beach Boys, the transformation

of the blues by Cream and even an analysis of how K.d. Lang changed the meaning of Joanne Sommers' "Johnny Got Angry." Covach contributes an essay on the progressive rock group Yes and how their music relates to the classical art song tradition.

"The distinction I have from other writers is that I'm probably the one guy who is the most reluctant scholar. If it turned out I could have stayed in the music, I would have," Covach said.

Covach's rock music classes have attracted the attention of the local media and the students. His history of rock class, a broad rock appreciation course, drew 237 students even though the limit was 200. The class includes listening to 10 90-minute tapes and having to identify groups, types of music and year released by listening to a brief excerpt. It covers every influence from blues and country-western to Frank Sinatra.

Covach also teaches classes for music majors. This fall he'll teach a class on the concept album including the Beatles' seminal "Sgt. Pepper" and Pink Floyd's "The Wall."

Covach said that most rock criticism has been more sociological than musical. He said he offers a legitimate and different approach. As a musicologist, he said, he can explain the "how" of music.

He is currently working on a book, "Rock Music Comes of Age," about rock music in the 1970s.

"It's a very hot issue, a lot of folks don't think there's any value in thinking in terms of music, that it makes rock like classical music, an elitist thing. It's in an academic setting, it is somewhat elitist," he said.

Covach and his wife, Julie, also a Livonia native, have two sons, Ricky, 10, and John, 4. They return to Livonia each year to visit family.



Rock writer: John Covach enjoys teaching, but he loves rock and roll.

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musical per year.

They're currently working on "Greasers," an original book and musical commissioned by Contemporary Drama Service.

At day jobs - for now

Vigilant and Castle's collaboration has evolved since they first set a melodrama to music 11 years ago, and performed the piece at the Golden Lion Theatre in Detroit.

Since then, they've been commissioned by Pioneer Drama Service and Contemporary Drama Service. Their work includes setting music to familiar stories such as "The Little Star," "Twins the Night Before,"

"King Midas and the Palace of Gold," "The Attack of the Killer Grasshoppers," and "Jungle Book."

That prolific output is even more impressive when considering that Vigilant and Castle both have day jobs and families.

And yes, they both are happily married.

"Relationships are very fragile. They can fall apart easily when you become selfish," said Castle of Warren, who works in customer service at Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Michigan.

When focusing on writing, Castle will memorize the lyrics and take walks at work to contemplate a melody. He'll work out

the song on guitar. An accomplished musician, Castle also performs locally with The Real Happy Swing and String Band and The Dennis Cyporin Band.

Meanwhile, Vigilant's day job doesn't take him far from his love of theater. He's public relations director for Meadow Brook Theatre, where, he confesses, the busy work often leaves little time to write his own plays.

But like Castle, he invariably finds time.

"I get moody when I don't write, so my wife and I work it out so there's time (for my writing)," he said.

And at the sound of the bell, the writing begins.

"Pinocchio," and "Wizard of Oz," and that's why Wagman chooses to present classics. You might know the stories, but you've never seen these shows before. "They're original musicals," she said. "I have an outstanding stable of composers, actors, and directors."

Classics also have vitality, they're timeless, other good reasons to present them. Her audience range from four to 12, but the shows are presented during the day, she draws a lot of senior citizens too.

"The audience knows what happens going in," she said. "They have expectations, and we help these kids meet them. We

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have full appreciation for these timeless classics. People just love the magic, and the stories are ancient."

American Family Theater travels around the country presenting children's shows at places like Meadow Brook, and in schools. Earlier this summer they presented "Beauty and the Beast," at Meadow Brook.

"We travel with full-blown sets," said Wagman. "They tend to move and switch in front of people's eyes. We have all kinds of yummy special effects that we can pull out of our hat."

She makes no distinction between professional "adult" theater and children's theater. "Good theater is good theater and good acting is good acting," she said. "There should be good, solid content, and seriousness of purpose in your presentation. We have the same intent and feel it should get the respect it deserves."

One of the greatest compliments ever paid to Wagman and a staff happened after a show. "The audience was arguing if the people waiting for the bus to pick them up after the show were the same people on stage. They didn't know if they were real - actors on stage - or puppets with music boxes. That's one of the wonders of what we do."

Sign up to be a Montreaux Volunteer player

Volunteers are the backbone of any great event, and the unsung heroes who work behind the scenes. An now, Music Hall, producer of the Ford Montreaux

Jazz Festival, is looking for motivated people to help make one of southeast Michigan's most exciting events again a success by signing up to be

MVPs- Montreaux Volunteer Players. In the past, nearly 400 dedicated individuals have annually volunteered their time and energy to the festival, which this year will be held Thursday-Monday, Sept. 3-7 at Hart Plaza. Collectively, the MVPs work 4,800 hours over Labor Day weekend to bring this world-class jazz event to nearly 780,000 festival goers each year.

Assignments are available to work backstage, transportation,

the festival office, information booth, and beverage sales. In addition to getting a behind-the-scenes look at the festival and being part of one of the city's biggest events, MVP perks include free parking, a festival credential, an official MVP t-shirt, and a 10 percent discount for all festival merchandise. Hours worked are flexible and are scheduled in two or three shifts totaling 12 hours.

To volunteer, call (313) 962-4312. For information about the festival, call (313) 963-762, or check out the web site www.montreuxdetroitjazz.com.

Ford Montreaux Detroit Jazz Festival showcases national, local and student jazz performers on five stages. Diana Schuur and The Duke Ellington Orchestra directed by Paul Ellington in a first-time-ever collaboration headline. Other top national acts include The Sun Ra All Star Project, Ruth Brown, Michael Brecker & David Liebman with the

feature children's entertainment. Entertainment schedule to be announced in mid-June.

■ Eats - A diverse menu will be created by the fifty participating restaurants including Mon Jin Lou, O'Grady's, Mr. B's and Steve's Soul Food.

■ For more information call (248) 334-4600, or check out the web site, www.artbeatseats.com

Michigan State Fair

The Community Arts Program for the Michigan State Fair is looking for groups of volunteers to host the Fine Art Show 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 25 to Monday, Sept. 7.

Community Arts Program director Alice Diefenthaler thought an art club or organization could divide a day long session among its members. A sign will be posted thanking the group for volunteering that particular day.

For more information or to volunteer, call (313) 369-8260.

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SUN., AUG. 2 **Detroit Symphony Orchestra**
Summer's Fantastique! • Conductor: Neeme Järvi

MON., AUG. 3 **Pinocchio**
Live Stage Presentation of The Children's Classic

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The Palace Box Office and all major Ticketmaster Charge (313) 635-4444. For info, call (313) 277-4444.

Sax man: Veteran Detroit jazz musician George Benson will perform 7:45 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 6, on the Ford Air Touch Cellular Stage at the Montreaux Jazz Festival.