

# Avon Players presents musical 'Children of Eden'

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"Children of Eden" isn't as well known as other musicals presented by local theater groups, but it sure has a lot of familiar things in it.

For one, the plot is based on portions of the Old Testament. Its main characters, such as Adam and Eve and Noah, are household names and the music and lyrics are written by Stephen Schwartz.

That's the same Schwartz who recently won the Academy Award for his song, "When You Believe," written for the Dream-Works Pictures movie, "The Prince of Egypt." He also wrote five other original songs for the movie and is well-known for his music for the animated movies "Pocahontas" and "The Hunchback of Notre Dame."

The older crowd will recognize his name from the musicals "Pippin" and "Godspell," just to name a few.

Thanks to Avon Players, peo-

**'The biggest thing I can do as a director is surround myself with the best people and get the right cast and staff.'**

**John Deierlein**  
director

ple have several chances to be introduced to this unique musical.

"Children of Eden" opens Friday at 8 p.m. in the Avon Players House Theater, 1185 Tienken Road in Rochester Hills.

Performance dates are April 30, May 1-2, 7-8, 14-16, 20-22. Sunday matinees begin at 2 p.m.; evening shows at 8 p.m. The only exception is Saturday, May 8. There will be a 2 p.m. and an 8 p.m. show on that day.

To order tickets, call the playhouse at 248-608-9077. Tickets are \$15 each. Group rates are available.

"We are so proud to be pro-

senting 'Children of Eden,' said director John (JD) Deierlein. 'It's a wonderful opportunity for us to showcase our local talent, which comes from many communities throughout the greater Detroit area, as well as the enchanting music by Schwartz and the familiar stories from the Old Testament.'

"Children of Eden" is based on a book by John Caird. It concentrates on relationships between children and parents, including the relationships between God as a father-figure and people.

Deierlein expects the show to be a hit on several levels. These include the choreography, the costumes, lighting, the stage, the orchestra and the 29 actors, including adults, teenagers and children.

"The biggest thing I can do as a director is surround myself with the best people and get the right cast and staff. Then I let them do their job."

This has resulted in a mechanical turn-table in a "Les Miserables" and rises to enhance the small stage. Because the musical

score calls for two sequencer machines which Avon Players doesn't have, musical director Steve Woznicki is using computers he's programmed to fill in for the instruments he won't have in the pit.

Karl Miller, who plays Father, one of the lead roles, hopes his former football buddies will come see him in this production.

Miller was a football star at both Southfield High School and Central Michigan University, where he had a four-year full football scholarship. He stopped playing football, he said, once he graduated college.

"I did musicals in high school but then concentrated on football in college. Ever since I graduated, it's been non-stop musicals."

"This is my first show with Avon Players, he added. It's an incredible show."

The Troy resident auditioned for the musical after listening to the compact disc recording and "falling in love" with the music. He works as a control manager for Import World Auto Parts.



STAFF PHOTO BY DONNA McLAUGHLIN

**A blessing:**  
Noah (Kim Monterosso) gives a special kiss to Yonah (Mary McCune) in the musical 'Children of Eden' at Avon Players Theater.

## Conversations from page C1

learners, but if educators can't develop the talents of these gifted children, then how can those less precocious students ever hope to get attention?

### Making connections

In his keynote speech on Monday, Dr. Robert Sylvester will explain how participating in the arts foster greater brain development in students.

"The more perspectives a child is exposed to, the more connections they make," said Kirker.

"The arts are essential to fully develop their brains."

In a gun-toting society of instant gratification where

access to building bombs is a web-page away, any easy answer to the problems of raising children to be "good human beings" is probably a reactionary response.

All that we know for sure is that education is the means.

The goal, however, is as unclear as the cloud on the horizon.

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## Premature from page C1

opposition to what Smith sees as the usual negative stories about premature births. When Elizabeth was born, the newspapers were covering the story of a doctor who pulled the plug on his infant son and many newspapers were running articles about the problems faced by premature babies.

"I wanted to show the other side, that it's not always total bleakness," Smith said. "A lot of families don't have that positive experience and I hope that I don't offend them."

The stories came from around the country and close to home. There is the story of Derrick and Torrey Scholz of Des Moines, premature twins who he had to fight for every breath. Derrick came through, but Torrey did not. There's the story of an accomplished young woman in her 20s who was born prematurely at a time when medical science wasn't as advanced. There's John Henry Kurtz, who's mother says she was visited by angels and who's faith carried her through continuing crises.

Each chapter tells of a different family and their struggles and triumphs. As a highly skilled reporter, Smith deftly weaves through a wealth of medical information within the context of each story.

"I felt people might get more from following a particular family all the way through their experiences," Smith said.

Smith's view is not Pollyanna. He realizes the immediate and continuing dangers for those born prematurely. He said lung and heart problems often plague premature children for several years. An eye condition called retinopathy of prematurity caused by being in an oxygen tent is also a common problem.

"I'm sorry for those cases that didn't turn out as my daughter's did or others in the book," he said. "Had my daughter taken a turn for the worse, you know if I wouldn't have written about the downsides of prematurity."

Smith said other parents were eager to share their stories and especially with him because he had been through the same experience.

In an introduction to the book, WDIV-TV anchorman Devin Scillian, the father of premature twins, writes about the camaraderie that develops among parents with a child in the NICU.

"Some parents would be open and some wouldn't," Smith said. "You got to know which ones you could talk with. Being side by side for months, you can't help but get to know them. You're going through something, the Premie Club, I call it, a common experience, and you get to know each other. Even relatives can't understand what it's all about."

"Miracle Birth Stories" is a way to offer that needed support and understanding.

"If they can pick up a book and see someone else has been through it, that was my goal, to be cathartic, a resource for parents," Smith said.

He said he hopes the book becomes a fixture in NICUs.

Smith said his religious faith was important to him during the down periods and especially the

support of the Rev. David Brown of Ward's Presbyterian who baptized Elizabeth in the hospital.

Smith's book is a generally positive view of medical care and the dedication of doctors and nurses.

"Communication between doctors and parents is critical," Smith said. "Give caregivers a little slack. Parents need to be informed as much as possible and understand everything."

Today, Elizabeth, "Bizzy Girl" to her parents, is a healthy 4-year-old, with the usual childhood illnesses. She's doing fine, as her father knew she would. After all, Tim Smith was born in December of 1966 and wasn't due until March of 1967.

"Miracle Births" will be in bookstores beginning May 1. Smith will bring a round of book signings and radio and television appearances. In July he will be signing books at a conference in Chicago for the Alois Foundation for Premature Infants and Children, headquartered in Birmingham.

## ART BEAT

### DADA GALLERIES OPEN SUNDAYS

The Detroit Art Dealers Association will continue "Gallery Sundays," on Sunday, May 2.

DADA is an alliance of professional art dealers in metro Detroit.

The galleries will be open on the first Sunday of each month, from 1-4 p.m.

The following is a list of participating galleries:

■ Hill Gallery, 407 W. Brown, Birmingham; (248) 640-9288

■ Robert Kidd Gallery, 107 Townsend, Birmingham; (248) 642-3909

■ David Klein Gallery, 163 Townsend, Birmingham; (248) 433-3700

■ Lemberg Gallery, 538 N. Old Woodward; Birmingham; (248) 642-3909

■ G. R. N'Namandi, 161 Townsend, Birmingham; (248) 642-2700

■ Revolution, 23257 Woodward, Ferndale; (248) 541-3444

■ Sherry Washington Gallery, 1274 Library St., Detroit; (313) 961-4500

■ Yaw Gallery, 550 N. Old Woodward Avenue, Birmingham; (248) 647-5470

## DIA from page C1

rent space, said Michael Graves, architect of the DIA's master plan.

Within a year, further renovation included in the master plan will be visible.

A promenade will be constructed along the DIA's north-south side. And the 30,000 square feet of new exhibit space will be fit within the current Prentiss and North courts. The actual type of art to be exhibited, however, is still being debated.

"The idea is to have a building where visitors are able to get to exhibits more easily," he said.

"How can we get people to understand that the front door of the DIA is for everybody?"

### Challenge to be great

Last year, after the transfer of the day-to-day operation of the museum from the city of Detroit to a nonprofit corporation reporting to the Detroit Arts Commission, the effort was undertaken to restructure the DIA. Redefining the organization and mission of the museum, including broadening the composition of the board, and clarifying how to be more relevant to the community, said DIA interim director Parish.

"It's been an evolutionary process," he said. "Once we determined our long-term goals, we realized the (financial) numbers.

Then, we had to look at how we would raise the money. It was apparent that people had to step forward."

The DIA didn't have to look far. Ford, Manogian and Taubman have provided the ultimate example of practicing what you preach.

"Great museums must reflect their times, that is our challenge and opportunity," said Manogian.

The \$60-million gift, he emphasized, was only a beginning.

### Open the floodgates

The magnitude, timing and influence of the donation of near-

ly 17 percent of the total DIA fund-raising campaign is expected to open a floodgate of donations from businesses and foundations.

"It wasn't a difficult decision to invest into the future of this institution," said Taubman, who is also majority shareholder and chair of Sotheby's, the prestigious international fine art auctioneers located in New York and London.

"It's one of the most important institutions in all of Michigan and surrounding states. Not everyone might appreciate it, but when we finish with this (campaign), the museum will be more available to the people in the region."

"Many people out there feel similar as I do. Here's an opportunity to express their commitment."

If renewed hope for the prospects of the cultural capital of Michigan needed replenishing, then consider the cup running over.

There must have been a similar feeling in 15th-century Florence.

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