

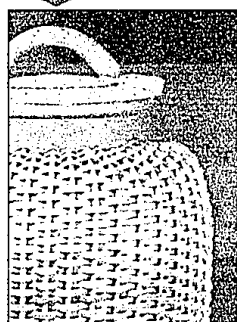
## THE WEEKEND

### FRIDAY



Pianist Awadagin Pratt performs Beethoven's Concerto No. 3 with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, 8 p.m. at Orchestra Hall in Detroit. Tickets \$13 to \$48, call (313) 576-5111.

### SATURDAY



Helen Springer is one of 180 artists participating in the 21st Ann Arbor Spring Art Fair 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Washtenaw Farm Council Grounds, 5055 Ann Arbor-Saline Road. Admission is \$5, children under age 10 free. For more information, call (800) 888-9487.

### SUNDAY



The Duttons bring their blend of country, folk, classical and toe-tapping bluegrass to the Southfield Centre for the Arts, 24350 Southfield Road. Admission to the 3 p.m. concert is \$10 per person. Call (248) 424-9022 for tickets and more information.



Amy Sonne, a North Farmington High School graduate, is featured in "Rugrats — A Live Adventure," Friday, April 30 through Sunday, May 9 at the Fox Theatre in Detroit. Tickets \$25, \$19.50, and \$12.50, call (313) 983-6611 for information, or (248) 433-1515 to charge tickets.



Musical: "Fame - The Musical" features an ensemble cast of 25 dynamic performers including Gavin Creel, a recent University of Michigan graduate.

## 'Fame' is fun, but sometimes lonely for actor

BY KEELY WYGONIK  
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Being on the road with "Fame — The Musical" is fun, but lonely at times.

"It's like big highs, deep lows," said Gavin Creel who plays Nick Piazza in the production now playing at Music Hall in Detroit.

"Fame" is what Creel prepared for when he went to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. After graduating from the theater program in May 1998, he moved to New York City. He auditioned for the part of Nick in "Fame" in September, got it and started rehearsals Oct. 12. He's been on the road with the show since November traveling to Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal, Canada, and across the U.S.

David De Silva who created the show and is called "Father Fame" said Creel is one of the most popular characters in the show and gets more e-mail at the Web site [www.famethemusical.com](http://www.famethemusical.com) than anyone else.

Creel and I talked by phone from Montreal, where the production was playing on April 22.

"It's a lot of fun," he said. "The cast is mostly around my age, 22. It's a nice, good group of people." Creel says he's lucky to be a working actor, a lot of people aren't.

"I'm learning a lot about the biz," he said. "In school you hone your craft and concentrate on scene techniques and acting. Now I'm learning about Equity rules and what my rights are, about the importance of having connections.

You have to have a business mind in addition to being a talented, good actor, it's invaluable."

"Fame" wasn't what Creel set out for when he moved to New York. In fact, he'd just signed with an agency who didn't even recommend him for the part of Nick. "I read about the audition in 'Back Stage.' They were looking for

young, energetic, high school age looking actors," said Creel. "Everyone tells me I look young. I figured I had a good chance, so I went to open auditions and stood in line with everyone else. I got called back, and knew I was pretty much right for the part."

"Fame," set in the 1980s at New York's High School of Performing Arts, follows a group of students over four years.

Nick, the role Creel plays, is a serious actor who has done some commercials, TV and a movie. A child star, he wants to work hard and learn the classics.

"It's a journey to see where he fits in," said Creel. "He learns to loosen up."

"Fame" the 1980 MGM motion picture, inspired a TV series "Fame." The stage musical premiered 16 years after the movie was released.

Except for the title song, all of the music in the musical version of "Fame" is new.

"I didn't want to do a compilation of songs," said De Silva. "We

### "Fame — The Musical"

WHEN: Continues through Sunday, May 2

PERFORMANCES  
■ 7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 29  
■ 8 p.m. Friday, April 30  
■ 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Saturday, May 1  
■ 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. Sunday, May 2

WHERE: Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts, 350 Madison Ave., Detroit.

TICKETS: \$27.50 to \$50, call (248) 645-6666. For more information, call (313) 983-0611.

recorded the new soundtrack in Toronto. I didn't want to just throw songs out there."

"Fame — The Musical" seems to have hit a nerve. It's popular around the world.

"People have an interest in seeing kids with a passion follow their dreams," said De Silva. "This music seems to inspire young people. Many kids are not exposed to the arts in public school. They don't cut back sports programs, but they cut arts. 'Fame' draws attention to the arts in education."

### Arts in education

It also draws a young audience, in addition to the usual mature theater crowd. "A lot of kids don't know what they want to do. But the arts are important no matter what they decide to do. You'll be a better lawyer if you study acting, even if you don't become a professional musician, you'll go to concerts and buy recordings if you study music. The arts feed the spirit. We're bringing up a generation of children in some school districts that are not exposed to the arts. When I was in school we had music appreciation classes, I doubt if they do anymore."

Students from Abbott Middle School in West Bloomfield and Thurston High School in Redford, are among the thousands of students in southeast Michigan who will tune in via teleconference 10-11 a.m. Thursday, April 29 to watch a live education presentation with the cast of "Fame — The Musical." The program will show students how the work they do in

Please see FAME, E2

## JET premieres 'The Caregiver'

BY KEELY WYGONIK  
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It's unusual for the Jewish Ensemble Theatre to present a play that hasn't had a full production, but they're making an exception for "The Caregiver" by Ian Strasfogel, which opened Wednesday, April 28, for previews. It will be JET's third world premiere of an original work in 10 years.

It is the story of an aging, retired world class conductor who suffers from dementia, and the relationships he has with his only son, Eric, and caregiver Laura. Eric is beginning his career as a conductor and on tour as the play progresses.

"I loved it," said Evelyn Orbach, artistic director of JET Theatre.

She heard about the play from an old friend, Max Wright, an early graduate of the Hilberry Theatre program at Wayne State University.

Wright and Orbach appeared on stage together at the Theatre Company at the University of Detroit in 1976 and kept in touch.

A successful actor, Wright did a reading of Strasfogel's play, and invited a friend, Sol Frieder, who performs often at JET Theatre, to attend.

"They talked and realized both had worked with me," said Orbach. "Sol and Max said I should do this play. The playwright set

up a reading at his apartment in New York. Sol read the part of the conductor. He was perfect for the part, and I decided to do it. This is Sol's fifth or sixth production at JET. Our audience is always pleased to see him. He's a fine actor with strength."

Partly autobiographical, Strasfogel was inspired by the experience of caring for his father, a renowned opera coach and conductor who developed Alzheimer's when he got older.

"When his father got very ill he could still sit down at the piano and improvise," said Orbach. "He was still a very sophisticated musician."

He used other source material, which helped inspire the story.

"The leading man falls in love, it's a very charming role for Sol," said Orbach. "It's funny and, in some places, sad and poignant."

In the play, the conductor and his caregiver, portrayed by Kate Willinger, recently seen locally in "I Love You, You're Perfect — Now Change" at the Gem Theatre in Detroit, fall in love. She sparks his creative spirit, and he

Please see CAREGIVER, E2

### On Stage

WHAT: Jewish Ensemble Theatre presents "The Caregiver" by Ian Strasfogel  
WHERE: Aaron DeRoy Theatre, lower level of the Jewish Community Center, 6600 W. Maple Road (corner of Maple and Drake Roads), West Bloomfield

WHEN: Previews continue through Sunday, May 2. Show opens 7:30 p.m. Sunday, May 2. Show dates May 5-9, May 12-16, May 19-23, and May 26-30. Performance times are 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday; 8 p.m. Saturday; and 2 p.m. Sunday.

TICKETS: \$15 to \$23, discounts for seniors and students. Call (248) 788-2900.

### POPULAR MUSIC

## Julian Lennon won't be manipulated by Yoko

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO  
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Surrounded by McDonald's wrappers in a Highland Park photo studio, Julian Lennon kicks back and takes a long drag off a cigarette. Funny and personable, Lennon chats up his new album "Photograph Smile," his seven-year hiatus from the music business and the days he spent relaxing in his home in northern Italy.

Upon the mention of his stepmother, Yoko Ono, Lennon's disposition changes.

He leans forward, puts his hands on his knees and peppers his conversation with the word "manipulative."

Lennon explained that it's more than a mere coincidence that "Photograph Smile" was released in the United Kingdom on May 18, 1998, the same day as his brother Sean Lennon's "Into the Sun."

"She indirectly had me taken off the priority list on some of the distribution labels we were with. Many other scenarios which are not nice at all will come

Please see JULIAN, E2



Visiting Detroit: Julian Lennon stopped in Detroit briefly to talk about his latest album "Photograph Smile," as well as his rocky relationship with Yoko Ono.

STAFF PHOTO BY ELIZABETH CANNON