

THEATER

EMU grads give fantastik help

Eastern Michigan University presents "The Fantasticks," book and lyrics by Tom Jones, music by Harvey Schmidt, 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, June 4-5, Thursday-Saturday, June 10-12, and 2:30 p.m. Sunday, June 6 at the Sponberg Theatre on EMU's Ypsilanti campus. Tickets \$7 for Thursday performances, \$12 Friday-Saturday, \$10 Sunday. Call (734) 487-1221.

BY KEELY WYGNIK
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The first time Dennis Cockrum played one of the fathers in "The Fantasticks," he was a student at Eastern Michigan University and dating the woman who played his daughter.

Now he's old enough to be his daughter's father and an award-winning actor.

"It's a shared experience, the first time you fall in love and get your heart broken," said Cockrum explaining why he believes "The Fantasticks" is such a popular show.

He's sharing the stage in the production which opens June 4 with another EMU alumni, and professional actor, Mike McCafferty. "Mike was in my classes," said Cockrum.

On stage and off, they're playing fatherly roles, sharing a little bit about what they know about the "real world of acting."



Dennis Cockrum

"We're teaching workshops about the business, pictures, resumes and agencies" said Cockrum. "We're also doing scene work on camera. Working on camera is different than working on stage."

Cockrum grew up in Plymouth, and graduated from Eastern Michigan University in 1977. He returned in 1984 to earn a master's degree.

Ken Stevens, who is directing "The Fantasticks," directed it when Cockrum was a student.

"He was the person who

exposed us to what professional theater would be like," said Cockrum.

"We regularly try to bring professional actors in. If they're alumni it's even better," said Stevens who is managing director of theater at EMU. "It's part of Eastern's general culture to be pretty personal and keep up with alumni. It's the nature of our campus. Mentoring is important part of our mission. We're here to prepare people for work, and I don't think there's a better way than meeting people who are in the profession. It helps the students develop professional relationships so when they move to New York or Chicago they already know someone who can help show them around."

Coming home to work with students and perform has been fun. "I'm actually surprised by the number of people who have not seen 'The Fantasticks,'" said Cockrum. The musical is celebrating its 40th year of continuous production at the Sullivan Street Playhouse in New York this month.

El Gallo narrates the story of neighbors Luisa and Matt who believe they are in love despite being separated by a wall and the "feud" of their fathers. Played by Cockrum and McCafferty, the fathers have been friends all along.

The wall falls, the lovers split up and then discover the true meaning of love.

"It has great songs, 'Try to Remember,' it's fun," said Cockrum. "I like to do theater in the spring. There's an energy you get from a live audience. Unfortunately, it's hard to make a living

doing just theater."

When the show closes on June 12, Cockrum will be packing his bags to head back to Los Angeles, which is now home.

"I'll be going for auditions," he said. "It beats working for a living. Working a 9-to-5 job would make me crazy," he said.

"My mom and dad still live in Plymouth, and being here a month gives me time to be around family and a chance to be doing something as well," he said.

"Cheers" fans might recognize Cockrum as the guy who married Corla's daughter. He's also appeared on episodes of "Melrose Place," "Home Improvement," "Northern Exposure" and "ER."

Film credits include "Uncle Buck," "The Glimmer Man," and "Desperate Measures." He also appears in the Showtime version of "Inherit the Wind," which aired Saturday.

"I seem to have done more comedy," he said. "Although I did do a dramatic role in 'Inherit the Wind.'" He received the Joseph Jefferson Citation for Guildenstern in "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead" at the Court Theatre in Chicago; and the Artisan Award for Jan in the world theatre premiere of "Mr. 80%," at Victory Gardens Theatre in Chicago.

McCafferty, formerly artistic director of Genetti's Little Theatre of Northville, is currently an associate guest artist for the Lamb's Players Theatre in San Diego. He has appeared in five independent films, and as Direct TV's "Answer Man."



On stage: Chuck Ganchorré (left) as the mute, Brandon Burns as Luisa and Tyson Navarre as Matt in the Eastern Michigan University production of "The Fantasticks."

Celebrate 40th year of Ann Arbor Street Art Fair

(PRNewswire) — A half million people from all over the country will take over the streets of Ann Arbor, Michigan from July 21-24 to view and purchase art from a wide variety of artists. Art from all over the United States as well as from around the world will be on exhibit at the Ann Arbor Art Fairs.

Eleven hundred artists offering both traditional and contemporary art are juried annually to ensure that the highest quality and excellence in art is presented at the fairs.

The Ann Arbor Art Fairs combine the talents of the artists with a host of merchants, food galore, art demonstrations, a variety of music, street performances, children's activity centers, and much more!

The original Ann Arbor Street Art Fair began forty years ago. The first fair "An experiment in Arts and Crafts" began in 1959 and spanned 3 blocks with 99 artists hanging their work on wire strung between parking meters, or placed in boxes of sand on the pavement. Forty years, 26 blocks and 1,000 more artists later, the fairs continue to paint the town.

In addition to the Ann Arbor Street Art Fair, The State Street Area Art Fair and The Ann Arbor Summer Art Fair have

also come aboard, expanding the fair. Each fair has something unique to offer, decorating the streets of Ann Arbor with vibrant displays that offer a variety of art media including glass, painting, ceramics, photography, fiber, jewelry, wood and more.

Performance areas will be dispersed throughout the fairs offering an eclectic diversity of talented musicians from around the world.

Jugglers, magicians and more will be interacting with children, offering entertainment for the whole family. Children and adults are also encouraged to stop by the Children's Activity Center and the Imagination Station to create their own artistic masterpiece.

Information booths will be positioned throughout the fairs offering free guides with artist listings, maps, shuttle information, and a schedule of music events and other activities. Fair hours are 10 a.m.-9 p.m. on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and 10 a.m.-6 p.m. on Saturday. Fair sponsors include: Absopure, Farmer Jack, Flagstar Bank, Keebler, Minute Maid, Sprint PCS, and Tempus Resorts.

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