

THE WEEKEND

FRIDAY



Aretha Franklin, the "Queen of Soul," makes a historic first appearance 8 p.m. with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra at Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Tickets \$30, \$50, \$75, \$125 and \$150, call (313) 576-5111.

SATURDAY



New Millennium Youth Theatre Company performs "The Snow Queen," by Hans Christian Andersen, 2 p.m. at the Millennium Centre, 15600 J.L. Hudson Dr. (between Eight and Nine Mile Roads), Southfield. Tickets \$5, call (248) 552-1225.

SUNDAY



University Musical Society presents "The Harlem Nutcracker," 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. at The Detroit Opera House, 26 Broadway, Detroit (corner of Madison Ave.). Tickets \$12-\$50, call (800) 221-1229, (313) 874-SING, or (248) 645-6666.

ADULT TICKET



Celebrate "Traditions of the Season," Friday, Nov. 27 through Sunday, Jan. 3 at Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village, Oakwood Boulevard at Village Road (west of the Southfield Freeway) in Dearborn. At the Museum, visitors will marvel at a 720-square foot gingerbread town with 32 gingerbread buildings and six toy trains pulling 75 cars over 500 feet of track. The Museum and Village are open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Admission adults \$12.50, senior citizens \$2 and over \$11.50, kids 5-12 years old \$7.50, children under five free. Call (313) 271-1620 for information.

BEHIND THE SCENES AT MEADOW BROOK'S "A CHRISTMAS CAROL"



Putting together: Scenery designer Peter Hicks, right, oversees the assembly of the intricate set for "A Christmas Carol."

ARCHITECTURE OF A HOLIDAY CLASSIC

BY FRANK PROVENZANO
STAFF WRITER
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It only seems appropriate that the story Charles Dickens claimed he laughed and cried over like no other would require the staging synchronization of a Swiss watch assembly line.

For Meadow Brook Theatre set designer Peter Hicks, Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" translates into 17 pages of densely filled blueprints, a large-scale hydraulic-powered turntable that reveals a two-sided, unfolding set and enough ersatz fiberglass bricks to build a small mansion in the rolling hills of Rochester.

On Saturday, Nov. 21, Meadow Brook Theatre initiated the holiday season with the opening performances of their 16th annual production of "A Christmas Carol."

Amazingly, the production hasn't grown tiresome over the years, largely due to Charles Nolte's lively adaptation, the intricately magical set designed by Hicks, and the

WHAT: "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens, adapted by Charles Nolte

WHEN: Through Sunday, Dec. 27. Performance times vary, call for information.

WHERE: Meadow Brook Theatre, Wilson Hall, Oakland University campus, Rochester.

TICKETS: \$25-\$30.50, call (248) 377-3300, or (248) 370-3316 for group tickets. Special discounts Thanksgiving weekend, Friday-Sunday, Nov. 27-29, adults paying full price may purchase half-price tickets for children age 12 and under.

1840s period costumes created by Barbara Jenks who counts more than 1,000 wardrobe pieces in "A Christmas Carol."

Before the curtain rises

Only the agonizingly agnostic and terminally crusty haven't read or watched a version of Scrooge's conversion from a greedy sinner to benevolent patriarch.

But long before the illusion of 19th-century London streets, the

sniveling Scrooge, and the suffering Cratchits make their way onto the Meadow Brook stage, the architecture of the play must be constructed.

"The physical plan of the set must serve the play and the director's interpretation," said Hicks. "And in our case, it must also fit the tight confines of a former recital hall."

Back in 1982 when "A Christmas Carol" was first performed, the guest designer hadn't planned on the set being used from year to year.

By the late 1980s, Hicks redesigned the set and the reconstructed carousel hasn't stopped turning. The play is unquestionably the most popular in Meadow Brook's history.

From year to year, "A Christmas Carol" attracts thousands of students and young families to the Wednesday-Sunday matinees over a six-week run.

"Before the curtain goes up, there's a few moments when the audience should be getting information from what's on the stage," said Hicks.

In those moments, audiences see a set seemingly pulled from a Currier and Ives painting, and hear costumed carolers in the hallways.

Time of joy

While most productions of "A Christmas Carol" borrow sappy Disney-like interpretations, Meadow Brook's holiday classic is perhaps more gritty, and closer to Dickens' bitter-sweet original tale.

And if anyone wants to see the closest dramatization of the real

Please see CLASSIC, E2



Hung up: Barbara Jenks, costume coordinator at Meadow Brook Theatre, stands amid the hundreds of costumes prepared for "A Christmas Carol."



Song & dance troupe shares Chinese treasure

Birmingham Seaholm High School plays host to an appearance by the Chinese National Song & Dance Troupe 6:30 p.m. Sunday.

The program "Bell and Drum of the Plateaus" features Tibetan and Mongolian dancers.

Gang Chen of Rochester Hills, an engineer with Chrysler, is the chairman of the organizing committee for the program and general secretary of the Chinese Association of Greater Detroit.

Chen said the company features 27 dancers who perform 17 dances in a two-hour program.

"We are extremely pleased to bring a true national Chinese treasure to the Metro Detroit area," said Chen. "We hope that the show will bring our audience a richer Thanksgiving holiday season."

The company is making stops in New York City, Columbus, Cleveland, Houston, Los Angeles, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Phoenix, Albuquerque and Honolulu.

"This December they have been invited to perform at the UN in New York on Dec. 25 and the company has arranged to appear in 20 cities in the U.S.," Chen said.

The dancers will be accompanied on traditional instruments.

"Bell and Drum of the Plateaus" will feature a mix of group and solo as well as modern and traditional folk dances. The Golden Drum and the Goddess, for example, describes how a Tibetan Buddhist uses a golden drum as a ritual object in temple ceremonies.

"The dances reflect the people's happiness, prosperity and feelings, dreams and desires," Chen said.

The Drum Dance features a group of male dancers wearing small bells on legs and waist who dance rhythmically to the beat of sheepskin drums. Zhouma is the Tibetan word for fairy and is the central character in a dance featuring a female solo with a group of male dancers in which Lady Zhouma attracts the attention of the young herdsmen.

Ozior is Tibetan for "light" or "fire." In this female solo performance the dancer expresses the hope that "light may eternally shine on humankind."

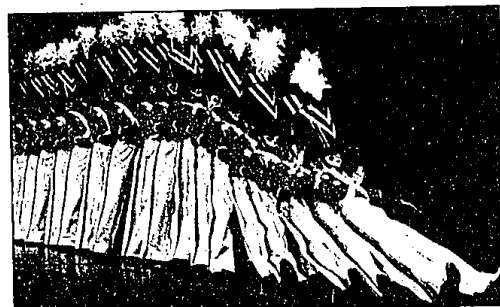
In addition to Tibetan and Mongolian dances, the program features other folk dances as well.

The Rainbow Sleeves dance is a Tu nationality dance featuring all women and centers on the seven colors of the rainbow, a prominent feature of the

Please see TREASURE, E2

HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA

Christmas comes early for local dancer - she's a Rockette



Holiday tradition: With military precision, the Rockettes perform their popular toy soldier dance.

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
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It's safe to say that Tracy Rysdale is thrilled about being a Rockette in this year's "Radio City Christmas Spectacular Starring The Rockettes."

"Living in Michigan, I grew up going to the Fox (Theatre) and seeing the ballet with my parents. This is not only a dream to be a Rockette but to be performing at the Fox Theatre. It's an absolutely beautiful theater. It's overwhelming but very exciting," Rysdale explained.

With non-stop enthusiasm, Rysdale tells of the thrill she gets performing as a Rockette. Since she was a child growing up in White Lake Township, she has dreamed about becoming a part of the team.

"I've wanted to be a Rockette since I was 7 years old. I didn't have a lot of flexibility when I was younger. Everyone else could do the higher kicks and

"The Radio City Christmas Spectacular starring The Rockettes"

WHEN: Friday, Nov. 27-Sunday, Dec. 30, at the Fox Theatre, 2111 Woodward Ave., Detroit.

TICKETS: Range from \$10-\$52.50. For ticket information, call (248) 433-1515, visit <http://www.ticketmaster.com> or any ticketmaster outlet. Groups of 20 or more should call (313) 965-3099.

PERFORMANCES: Several performances are scheduled, call for more information. This week's shows are 1 p.m., 4:30 p.m. and 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, Nov. 27-28; 1 p.m., 4:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 29; 8 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 1; 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 2; 8 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 3.

the splits. I was the one that couldn't do it. But I said one of these days I'm going to be a Rockette," Rysdale said.

A 1991 Waterford Kettering High

Please see DANCER, E2