

# You'd be a blockhead to miss 'Charlie Brown' musical

*"You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown," continues through Sunday, Dec. 27, at the Fisher Theatre in Detroit. Tickets \$26.50 to \$49, call (248) 645-6666.*

BY JON KATZ  
SPECIAL WRITER

The word went out: "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown" was being souped up for a Broadway run. But nobody expected their stroke of casting genius: Bill Gates as Charlie Brown! The program claims that Anthony Rapp, not his micro-softness, plays Charlie Brown, but have you ever seen them in the same room together? Just look at this guy and tell me I'm wrong.

Anyway, the 1967 off-Broadway "Peanuts" musical has, indeed, been refitted. And as one who has played both Linus and Snoopy locally, I heartily congratulate the production team for their loving and true-to-the-original expansion. Whether you have or haven't seen it before, or even been in it, "Charlie Brown" is an evening of pure "Happiness" right to the season.

With the blessings of "Peanuts" creator Charles Schulz, director Michael Mayer incorporated 26 newer "strips" and kept only 13 from the original.



On stage: Kristin Chenoweth (Sally, left to right), B.D. Wong (Linus), Anthony Rapp (Charlie Brown), Stanley Wayne Mathis (Schroeder), Roger Bart (Snoopy), and Ilana Levine (Lucy) in a scene from "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown."

nal. The show, after all, is presented in part as a live version of the famed comic strip, with Schulz's words of wisdom dished out like so many peas on a spoon (Lucy: "My Aunt Marian was

right. Never try to discuss marriage with a musician").

The new material works wondrously with the old. Charlie's still heartbreak over his slim chances with that red-haired girl ("I think I'll flap my arms and fly to the moon"). But Linus ("M. Butterfly" Tony-winner B.D. Wong) gets a fresh line to explain his blue cloth dancing partner ("Sucking your thumb without a blanket is like eating a cone without ice cream").

The original Clark Gesner songs are all there, with faithfully updated arrangements and added harmonies. And there are two new songs which are hold-ontremendous. "My New Philosophy" is a kind of "Hakuna Matata," as delivered by Sally (Kristin Chenoweth) and Schroeder (Stanley Wayne Mathis). "Beethoven Day" is a gospel number featuring Mathis, who has the best voice in the show. Both additions were composed by the show's musical supervisor, Andrew Lipka of Oak Park.

The character of Sally (Charlie Brown's feisty little sister) is new, and Chenoweth almost walks off with the show playing her. A tiny powerhouse who apparently sucks on a helium tank in the wings to get that

voice, she takes full advantage of a newly-extended rabbit-chasing bit with Snoopy, complete with musical spy themes from "Peter Gunn" to "Pier Gynt."

Rapp, Wong and Ilana Levine as Lucy are each so true to the author's intent. We're all holding the string with Rapp when that kite crashes. And who amongst us can help sighing when Linus disarms his super-crab sister with "You have a little brother who loves you?"

But - and you all knew this was coming - it's the Scoopster who dances off with most of the marbles. As a dog, Roger Bart is "de man." Whether it's atop a hydraulic doghouse-er, Sopwith Camel-dodging the Red Baron, or singing and dancing for his supper in the show-stopping "Supper-time" (which has been totally redone as "Joe Cool choreographed by Bob Fosse"), Bart gets four bars.

It's questionable if this delightfully and appropriately small production will be supported by Broadway crowds paying Broadway prices for Broadway spectacles. But right here, right now, and with just a few performances left, you'd be a blockhead to miss it.

## Kiss from page E1

Roll Hall of Fame. We just plan to be in the city that rock 'n' rolla. Before there was the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame, we were playing Cleveland. This feels to us like being home," Stanley told out a sold-out Gund Arena in Cleveland on Sunday, Dec. 6.

"I used to sit in a parked car at night. Sometimes I could hear this (Cleveland) radio station, WMMS. I would be in New York City and I knew something magical was happening there. I knew I would always be here. You're making my dream come true."

The tour is living up to Simmons' expectations. "Not only is it cool, it's also very expensive, which is why other bands are cowards. They talk, but they really don't want to be here. Every band says we care about our fans, but they don't put their money where their mouth is," Simmons said.

The cost is reflected in the ticket prices - \$75 and \$100. "I don't necessarily buy the idea that ticket prices have to be low. Bands should charge what they think they are worth. People have the ability to make the decision whether they want to get it or not," Simmons said.

"The thing that infuriates me is all of bands get up on stage and charge full price while giving you very little. We give you what you want."

**'The thing that infuriates me is a lot of bands get up on stage and charge full price while giving you very little. We give you what you want.'**

Gene Simmons  
Kiss

### Swinging in the New Year

Not everyone is into explosions, fireworks, blood and 3-D effects. So don't fret, there's plenty of other opportunities to ring in the New Year.

Swing is the thing in several area clubs. "Al Capone's New Year's Eve Party," at the 24 Karat Club in Westland, includes a performance by Swing Syndicate, buffet dinner and champagne toast at midnight for \$10-\$15.

The Velvet Lounge in Pontiac is celebrating the repeal of prohibition with a complimentary toast at midnight and a performance by Superdirt as part of the "Speakeasy New Year's Eve" event. Every year Pontiac drops a giant ball at midnight and the Velvet Lounge is offering a penthouse view of it.

For those with more discriminating tastes, The Detroit Symphony Orchestra is once again hosting its "New Year's Eve Gala" with performances by the

orchestra with conductor Neeme Jarvi and violinist Alexander Markov at 9 p.m.

The evening also includes dinner catered by Matt Prentice. Once the big and little hands strike midnight, there's dancing on the stage with the Keith Saxton Orchestra.

Jazz fans get multiple choices this holiday. David Sanborn is bringing his show to the intimate State Theatre in Detroit twice on New Year's Eve. Rachelle Farrell plays the Music Hall, and in Oakland County, Alexander Zonjic, host of the WVM morning show, will serenade diners at Baci in Pontiac, while Shahida Nurullah visits Edison's in Birmingham.

Families might want to check into the "New Year Jubilee" in Ypsilanti, or the alcohol-free "First Night" in Birmingham.

If disposable income isn't a problem, blues man Blues Bedow is reprising his Blue Year's Eve Party at the Kingsley Inn in Bloomfield Hills. Bedford resident B.B. Queen, a veteran of the "Jenny Jones

Show," is performing at Memphis Smoke in Royal Oak. The Witch Doctors are part of the New Year's Eve party at Karl's Cabin in Plymouth, where a special holiday menu will be available.

### Sink that darn film

The creative minds at the Arbor Brewing Company in Ann Arbor are hoping to sink the "Titanic" obsession with its anti-Titanic costume party.

"There was a couple here for Halloween who had the greatest Titanic ghost costumes. They wore all blue and had icicles hanging out of their hair. They're coming back so they can get double use out of their costumes," said Rene Greff, the owner of Arbor Brewing Company.

Greff and her husband are renting their costumes from Fantasy Attic in Ann Arbor. "They've got some of the Titanic costumes. The dress that she wore with the blue hope diamond. That's what I'm wearing. My husband's going to dress up as the captain," she said.

"Some people are doing like deck hands and more just traditional 1920s formal wear. Some people are doing the Irish peasant class. Our daytime dishwasher always does all the major decorations for our party. He's been working for months on stuff like building little life rafts, and he's got all these plans for making the brewery look underwater. It's going to be really fun."

## Animator from page E1

Egypt" different from other animated films you may have seen.

Under the direction of supervising animator Kristof Serrand, Culotta also worked on the animation for Pharaoh Seti who is the father of Rameses and Moses. In film version, Pharaoh seems very stern and unapproachable. In "The Prince of Egypt," he is a fatherly figure who disciplines his sons yet forgives their pranks.

"I think 'The Prince of Egypt' is special because it's a little different from other animated films," said Culotta. "They tried to tell a story with more complex emotions. If the film was made earlier, they might have made Moses the hero and Rameses the villain. Even though you care more for Moses, you realize that Rameses still loves his brother and wants to be with him. You feel sorry for him. They're complex emotions, it's not just black and white."

Culotta is busy at work on his next project for DreamWorks - "El Dorado," a comedy adventure

about two con men aboard Cortes' ship and the adventures they have.

He lives two miles from work and likes his new office with a view of a mammoth waterfall. "DreamWorks has been wonderful, they spoil us rotten," he said.

His advice to anyone dreaming of being an animator is to "just draw and draw from life. So you really know how things are put together go outside and draw people, life drawing classes are essential. The best animators draw all the time."

He'll be spending Christmas in California and will then fly to Massachusetts to be with his brother Mark and his family. His parents John and Lynn still live in Plymouth.

"The last time I was home was two years ago," he said. "I miss the seasons. I like snow, and I love fall, but I've become acclimated to California."

Ultimately, Culotta said he would like to do his own short animated films. He'd also like to do a children's book.

## Stagecrafters draws on community for help

Stagecrafters in Royal Oak is holding a contest for a new logo. Submissions should be postmarked no later than Jan. 15 and contain the following elements:

Stagecrafters name, the words "Baldwin Theatre" are optional. Royal Oak, Michigan, 2-part design: a) logo with the word "Stagecrafters" and b) with "Baldwin Theatre."

Submit your designs on 8.5 by 11-inch paper. Designs can be

submitted in black and white or color. Include your name on a separate sheet of paper, but in the same envelope as the design.

Mail your entry to Cate Foltin, Executive Director, Stagecrafters, 415 South Lafayette, Royal Oak, MI 48067.

For a background packet on Stagecrafters and the history of the Baldwin Theatre, call (248) 541-8027.

The Award Package for the winning logo design includes - Logo unveiled at opening of upcoming Stagecrafters Main Stage production, media coverage, pair of 99-00 Main Stage season tickets, Pair of 99-00 2nd Stage season tickets, Plaque with winning design permanently displayed in vestibule of theater, Stadium jacket with logo and set of four coffee mugs with logo.

"The Board of Directors of Stagecrafters is looking for a new corporate image that meets our image today and where we are headed in the future," said Foltin. "This logo (which may or may not include type-face) has to be attractive, immediately recognizable, or easily identifiable, present a positive image for Stagecrafters, translate well into black and white, and any something unique about the organization."

The contest is open to all members of Stagecrafters as well as members of the community. All submissions will be confidential. The membership of Stagecrafters will vote on the winner in an upcoming newsletter.

Stagecrafters mailed approximately 1,000 Gala-in-a-Boxes, a small cd-size box promising a party inside. It's a fund-raiser for the Stagecrafters Building Restoration Fund.

If you haven't received a Gala-in-a-Box and would like to make a contribution to Stagecrafters, call (248) 541-8027.

## Jamaican Joe's

ISLAND GRILL

### Take a Caribbean Cruise and Celebrate New Year's Eve

Complete Dinner/Dancing Package  
\$65 per person

Nightclub Dance Package  
\$20 in advance or \$25 at the door

**Bon Voyage to 1998 Cocktail Reception 7-8 PM**  
Five Course Dinner including:  
Soups, Salads, Entrees: Boston Bay Stuffed Flounder, Caribbean Jerk Chicken Breast and Island Shrimp, Filet Mignon Beurre, Surf & Turf, Seafood Linguine, Slow Roasted Prime Rib of Beef, Au Jus, Caribbean Spiced Seafood Mixed Grill.  
Dessert Menu and Sampling of Coffee and Tea  
Breakfast Buffet 1-3am

**RESERVATIONS CALL (248) 926-5300**

6011 HAGGERTY ROAD • WEST BLOOMFIELD • 248-926-5300

### DON PEDRO'S

Have Your Early New Years Eve Dinner Here 11-9

**NIGHTLY DINNER SPECIALS**  
December Special  
Complementary SOPAPILLAS  
When you mention this ad

**MEXICAN SAMPLER FOR TWO**  
Includes: Steak, Fajita, 2 Tacos, Cheese Enchilada, El Pasa, Burrito, Tortada, Beans and Rice.  
Dine-In • Coupon Expires 12/31/98  
Not valid with any other offer.

**24366 Grand River**  
(3 blocks W. of Telegraph)  
CARRY OUT (313) 537-1450

**FREE BANQUET ROOM**  
AVAILABLE FOR PARTIES  
SHOWERS, WEDDINGS, ETC.  
Book Your Holiday Parties Now!

### 'TIS THE SEASON TO CELEBRATE WITH

**I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE**

Cute cast, fun show

**HOLIDAY SCHEDULE**

Wed. Dec. 23	8pm & 9pm	Tues. Dec. 29	8pm
Sat. Dec. 26	6pm & 9pm	Wed. Dec. 30	8pm & 9pm
Sun. Dec. 27	8pm & 9pm	Thur. Dec. 31	7pm & 10pm
Mon. Dec. 28	8pm	Sat. Jan. 2	6pm & 9pm

**GEM THEATRE • (313) 963-9800**  
333 Madison Ave. • Detroit, MI 48206  
Call Mike for groups of 15 or more (313) 945-2913

**EXTENDED THROUGH MARCH 28TH**

### Buddy's RESTAURANT

**We're Your PARTY PLACE**  
Call us now to reserve YOUR special date!

- Rehearsal Dinner • Shower
- Bachelorette • Birthday
- Graduation • Anniversary
- Road Rally • Kid's Party
- Sports Banquet • Holiday

**IF YOU CAN'T PARTY PACKAGES**  
100% of 1/8 or more

**LIVONIA**  
33605 Plymouth Road  
(West of Farmington Road)  
(734) 261-3550

**DEARBORN**  
22148 Michigan Avenue  
(Between Southfield & Telegraph)  
(313) 562-5900

**Other Buddy's Locations:**  
• Farmington Hills • Bloomfield  
• Royal Oak • Auburn Hills  
• Detroit • Warren • Potomac Plaza