

THE WEEKEND

FRIDAY



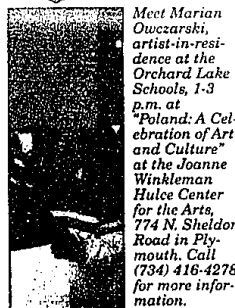
Bette Midler stars as flamboyant celebrity author Jacqueline Susann and Nathan Lane as her devoted husband and manager Irving Mansfield in "Isn't She Great" opening today at metro Detroit movie theaters.

SATURDAY

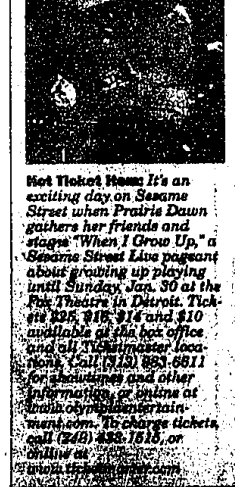


The Ann Arbor Folk Festival, 6 p.m. at Hill Auditorium in Ann Arbor, features Arlo Guthrie, Shawn Colvin, Great Big Sea, Beth Nielsen Chapman, Hot Club of Cowtown (pictured), Anne Hills, Fred Eaglesmith, David Barrett, Matt Watson and Robert Jones. Tickets \$30, \$25, call (734) 763-TKTS or (248) 645-6666.

SUNDAY



Meet Marian Oucarski, artist-in-residence at the Orchard Lake Schools, 1-3 p.m. at "Poland: A Celebration of Art and Culture" at the Joanne Winkelman Hulce Center for the Arts, 774 N. Sheldon Road in Plymouth, Call (734) 416-4278 for more information.



Hot Ticket Home: It's an exciting day on Seaside Street when Prairie Dawn gathers her friends and stage "When I Grow Up," a Seaside Street Live pageant about growing up playing until Sunday, Jan. 30 at the Fox Theatre in Detroit. Tickets \$25, \$15, \$10 and \$10 available at the box office and all Ticketmaster locations. Call (734) 883-6811 for showtimes and other information, or online at www.ticketmaster.com. To charge tickets, call (248) 433-1816, or online at www.ticketmaster.com.

Of MICE And MEN

FARMINGTON PLAYERS
REVISIT THE 1930S

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
STAFF WRITER
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A longtime fan of John Steinbeck, Suzanne Rogers thinks the Nobel Prize-winning author would be pleased that the Farmington Players are opening their run "Of Mice and Men" with a benefit for the Capuchin Soup Kitchen on Friday, Feb. 4. Directed by Rogers and produced by Mary Ann Tweedie, the riveting drama revisits the depressed era of the 1930s.

"We've done a lot of research, trying to be true to Steinbeck and as authentic as we can to what he was trying to say and also true to the times — these migrant workers and what life must have been like for them," said Rogers, who joined the Farmington Players 20 years ago.

"Steinbeck's career started in the '20s. He's done some of the work his characters do — migrant worker. Until the late '30s, when he became known, he really lived the struggling artist's life."

"The Capuchins started the soup kitchen when the stock market crashed and they wanted to do something about hunger in Detroit. The Capuchine will be providing home baked bread from their kitchen that night. It's a Depression party with a simple meal that might be reminiscent of that time. In keeping with the show and neighborliness, we're going to have hearty, comfort foods prepared by some of the members. It's really different for us, a groundswell effort from our own ranks."

Phil Hadley plays Slim in the pro-

duction. He agrees that tying the benefit to the drama is a natural. So is the exhibit of artworks by Nora Mendoza, which continues through the run of the show. The West Bloomfield artist's "Migrant Worker" series captures the dismal living and working conditions in the camps and fields. Known internationally for her socially conscious paintings, Mendoza will be on hand for the opening.

"Of Mice and Men takes place in the depression and deals with less fortunate people and that's what the Capuchin Soup Kitchen does," said Hadley. "It's timeless. The dream has a hope for the future."

Benefit performance

The Capuchin benefit is the second this season. Proceeds from a fund-raiser for the opening of "The

"Of Mice and Men"

WHAT: John Steinbeck's riveting story about two drifters with a special friendship and big dreams.

WHEN: 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, Feb. 4-5, Feb. 11-12, 18-19, Thursday-Saturday, Feb. 24-26, and 2 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 6, 13 and 20.

WHERE: Farmington Players Barn, 32332 W. 12 Mile Road, between Farmington and Orchard Lake roads.

TICKETS: \$12; 8 p.m. Friday, Feb. 4 performance is a benefit for the Capuchin Soup Kitchen, tickets are \$50. Call (248) 553-2855 to reserve tickets, or for more information.

new facility is scheduled to open the 2001-02 season. It will seat 240, compared to 170 now. It will be a place for all members of the community to gather. Hadley, a Players board member and manager of the new barn, said it's a very flexible facility with a recital and performance hall and meeting rooms for



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DESSLER

Award winning drama: Kathleen Warner (left), Curley's wife, taunts John Boufford (front), Lennie, just as Thomas Adams, who plays George, walks onto the set "Of Mice and Men."

other areas of the community to use. An art display area will allow the audience to take in exhibits such as Mendoza's.

"We've had benefits for ourselves before but only this season have started to reach out to the community," said Rogers, who came up with the idea for the first fund-raiser. "We want to lay a financial foundation for the new theater. We've been reaching out to the community a lot. We've been asking for money for the new theater and wanted to give back."

Reversing roles

Michael Carraway wanted to be in one of the last productions before the old barn is razed at the end of the season. A member of the Farmington Players for 20 years, this is his first time on stage. In the past, his day job as a director and producer of corporate films prevented him from acting because of the travel involved. Carraway plays The Boss.

"The dog is on more than I am," joked Carraway of West Bloomfield. "I wanted to be able to say I was on stage. I don't want to make more of my character than it deserves. Since we've begun rehearsal, one of the things that I've always been cognizant of is communicating with the director, putting yourself in his place. It's a lot of trust in yourself and in the people helping you."

This is John Boufford's first show as well. He plays Lennie, the slow drifter who's enamored of George (played by Thomas Adams). Boufford's biggest challenge so far "is to remember all his lines." He said, he's not nervous about the part otherwise.

"I'm a lawyer so nothing scares me," said the 28-year old Boufford. "I'm used to being in front of a room full of jurors. And I like my character. He's the ultimate child at heart. He captures that one part of us that wants to be a child."

"This is Thomas Adams' first big drama" although he's been in theater since grade school. Many of his roles were in musicals.

"It was very overwhelming, especially when I first got the part," said Adams of Farmington. "I relate to my character in certain aspects. He has a big heart. He does have some explosive moments and that's how I'm unlike him."

A fight coach, Eric Gratton from The Hilberry is working with cast members to choreograph the two fight scenes in the production. Until the sessions began Frank Ginis worried someone might be injured.

"I'm a big Steinbeck fan," said Ginis. "My role as Curley is physically difficult, but we've had a coach here showing us warm-up exercises and different punches. The idea is to make the fight look real without hurting each other."

GAMING

Ladies and gentlemen, place your bets

Keeping watch: Cathy Koch (right) of Farmington Hills keeps an eye on Sue Johnson as she runs a Caribbean stud poker game at the MGM Grand Casino.



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL HANSEN

STORIES BY SAM TRUCOMO
STAFF WRITER

Lights flash and smoke from cigars and cigarettes wafts through the air.

A drink order arrives as a group of voices climb above the already deafening din. Not the place one would expect to witness a birth but from her perch, Cathy Koch of Farmington Hills sees thousands of them every night.

Koch has no formal medical training. For 21 years she taught music at Roosevelt Elementary School in Oak Park. Last year, she traded in the satisfaction she received when helping young fingers manage clarinets and trumpets to preside over a nightclub birthing station where hundreds of winners and losers are born every minute — Detroit's MGM Grand Casino.

Determining whether the newborn belongs to the winner or loser family is not a difficult task for Koch. A partial clue to the player's lineage sits before

Competition is good winning is better

For several months MGM enjoyed a local monopoly on legalized gaming in Detroit but competition, the life blood of a capitalist society, put an end to that. The former Wonder Bread bakery at Grand River Avenue and the Lodge Freeway represents the city's second temporary casino.

With 188,000 square-feet of gaming space spread over four floors, the Motor City Casino boasts more total parking and gambling space than its older sibling.

One-hundred-thirty-six table games and 2,618 electronic games, including slot machines and video poker, fill the spaces where bakery ovens once produced the soft, white bread made famous in Detroit.

While the MGM Grand opened to rounds of criticism for its sometimes difficult parking configurations, Motor City offers patrons 3,000 free car spaces in a four-story garage.

Motor City also offers convenience to patrons, being situated directly off the Lodge Freeway.

In the event of car trouble, Motor City offers patrons free basic assistance like jump starts.

Motor City is operated by the Mandalay Resort Group, formerly Circus Circus Enterprises.

The group operates 11 gaming properties in Nevada including the Escalade in Las Vegas.

Please see A15, E2