

Thursday, May 10, 2001

THE WEEKEND

FRIDAY



Linda Gozdich of Westland and Barry Levine play key roles in "The Bad Seed," 8 p.m. at the Berwyn Center, 26155 Richardson, Dearborn Heights. Tickets \$8 adults, \$6 students and seniors, call (313) 277-7900.

SATURDAY



Donny Osmond performs songs from his newest CD, "This is the Moment," a collection of Broadway hits, 8 p.m. at the Fox Theatre in Detroit. Tickets \$37-\$52, call (313) 983-6611, or (248) 433-1515.

SUNDAY



Giant beasts can be seen roaming a four-acre Dino-Trail at the Detroit Zoo through Sept. 3. It's part of the Dinosauria III exhibit, which also includes a DinoSimulator. Zoo admission \$7.50 adults, \$5.50 seniors and students. Call (248) 398-0900 or visit www.detroitzoo.org for details.

HOT TICKET



Dreamwork's animated film, *Shrek*, doesn't open until May 18, but the Star Southfield Entertainment Centre is offering plenty of *Shrek*-related, Mother's Day activities on Saturday. Youngsters can keep busy while trying to win prizes for their mothers. The fun begins at 10 a.m. with a karaoke contest at the theater complex, on 12 Mile Road, between Telegraph and Northwestern Highway. Call (248) 372-2222 for information.

Verdi's Last Laugh



MOT performs the comedic opera, Falstaff

By ALICE RHEIN
STAFF WRITER
arhein@oe.hometown.com

So what makes a composer who's been known all his life for serious, melancholy work decide at 80 to make a comic opera?

For Giuseppe Verdi, Italy's master of opera who died 100 years ago this year, the impetus came at the coaxing of a longtime friend, Arrigo Boito. Boito had an idea for a libretto based on Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor* and Henry IV, and he wasn't going to stop until he got Verdi to compose the music.

Of course, Boito was successful, and this week, the Michigan Opera Theatre will present Verdi's *Falstaff*, based on Shakespeare's less-than-noble knight.

For Verdi, the immediate acceptance of *Falstaff* by the public and critics when it premiered in 1893 proved that he could write in comedic style, despite an earlier comedic opera, *turn-of-fiasco* that nearly ended his career.

But by 80, Verdi was secure in himself — he had, after all, written *Aida*, *Rigoletto* and *La Traviata*. So perhaps he was at a stage in life when he knew he could throw caution to the wind.

"He was able to let go of his inhibitions and compose without fear," said Greg Fortner, assistant stage director for the MOT and a Novi resident. "He probably had a great time doing it."

Certainly Fortner, who's been with the MOT for a year, is having a great time helping pull this production together.

"Dr. D (DiChiera, the MOT's general director) picked out a wonderful cast. They all have beautiful voices and really pick up on the characters," said Fortner, who will work with stage director Mario Corradi during this production.

For the role of Falstaff, American bass baritone John Del Carlo and Italian baritone Mauro Buda will share the role.



Out of the box: Hiding in a laundry basket, Sir John Falstaff is subjected to many jokes at the expense of Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Page.

The cast also features baritone Gary Lehman making his Michigan Opera Theatre debut as Ford. The role of his wife, Alice, will be sung by Madelyn Monti. Soprano Nicole Heaton makes her MOT debut as Nanetta and Matthew Tuell will sing the role of Bardolfo. Marianna Karpatova portrays Mistress Quickly, Kate Aldrich is Meg Page, James Patterson is Pistol and tenor Patrick Marques is Dr. Caius.



Ready for love: Dressed in his wooing finery, Falstaff attempts to gain the admiration of one of the merry wives.

Italian conductor Maurizio Barbacini, recently appointed principal conductor of the Philadelphia Opera Company, will lead the MOT orchestra.

The story behind this opera revolves around the egocentric Sir John Falstaff, who plots affairs with Mrs. Page and Mrs. Ford to get some money out of them. The wise wives are in on the plot, and with the help of Dame Quickly plan a little lesson for Falstaff.

Inevitably, there is chaos, and much laughter at the expense of Falstaff. Woven into the hilarity is a love story between Nanetta Page and Fenton, who manage to marry through a

What: The Michigan Opera Theatre presents Giuseppe Verdi's comic opera *Falstaff*.
Where: Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway, Detroit.
When: 8 p.m. Saturday, May 12; 2 p.m. Sunday, May 13; 8 p.m. Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, May 16, 18 and 19; 2 p.m. Sunday, May 20.
Tickets: Range in price from \$18-\$98 and can be purchased at the Detroit Opera House box office or by calling (313) 237-SING or at any TicketMaster outlet (248) 645-6666.
Information: Call the Detroit Opera House at (313) 237-SING.

Please See FALSTAFF B2

Kids can help Steve solve Blue's clues

By KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER
kwygolik@oe.hometown.com

Kids today are wired — TV, video, Internet — they're plugged in and connected. But live theater is something many haven't experienced, except on TV, of course.

The virtual world and real world collide when *Blue's Clues Live!*, a theatrical extravaganza based on *Blue's Clues*, the popular Nickelodeon TV show for preschoolers, comes to the Fox Theatre, May 16-20.

Thomas Mizer, Steve to the kids, owns the puppy named Blue.

Introduction to theater

"Although it comes from a TV show we wanted it to be about exposing kids to theater," said Mizer who joined the tour in October 1999. "We're such a VCR culture. This gets kids out away from the TV to listen to laughter as a group."

Children are invited to the wonderful world of theater where it snows, and you can fly into outer space.

Blue and Steve lead the audience on a clue-based journey in search of "the most spectacular place of all."

They explore the Storybook Forest and meet The Three Little Pigs, Goldilocks, The Big Bad Wolf, and other classic fairy-tale characters.

Traveling in outer space, Blue and Steve encounter planets and other celestial wonders. Along the way, the audience helps Steve solve Blue's Clues to discover the most spectacular place in all the world.

"We build upon the TV show," said Mizer. "There's a Broadway dance number, and the show is beautifully

Please see BLUE, B2



Interactive show: With help from the audience, Steve (Thomas Mizer), finds clues from his puppy, Blue in "Blue's Clues Live!"

COMMUNITY THEATER

Livonia actor plays role in 'The Secret Affairs of Mildred Wild'

By KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER
kwygolik@oe.hometown.com

Dennis Day has never appeared in drag before. It's really something to see — fishnet stockings, a little skirt — imagine a chorus line dancer, and you'll get the picture.

It's just one of the characters he plays in *The Secret Affairs of Mildred Wild*, a SRO Productions comedy that runs weekends through May 27.

Day portrays Carroll, the butcher, Mildred's best friend. They go to classic movies together, and when Mildred daydreams, she pictures herself, Day, and the other people in her life, as characters from the movies.

"When she dreams she becomes a movie character to escape her unhappy marriage," said Day. "There's one scene where she's Scarlett O'Hara from *Gone with the Wind*. Her husband is Rhett Butler, and I'm her mame."

Mildred's world is falling apart. Her husband is cheating on her, she wants to be a movie star, but doesn't have the ambition to pursue it. The candy shop she runs isn't as successful as it could be. Her husband's meddling sister, the landlady, and foreman of a working crew sent to tear down the building she lives in, add to Mildred's problems.

In her dreams, her husband is Rhett Butler, and loves her. It's a way of working out problems where everyone lives happily ever after.



Having a wild time: Kathleen Booker (left to right), Mark Mutafian, and Dennis Day in a scene from "The Secret Affairs of Mildred Wild."

It's also a very funny problem solving method that's sure to get hoots from the audience.

Barbie Amann, SRO Productions' executive producer, describes the play written by Paul Zindel as being "zany with a lot of slapstick comedy."

Mildred, portrayed by Kathleen Booker of Walled

Lake, is a creative, imaginative person. Whenever she has a problem she things how would one of her favorite movie characters solve it.

"Her life is falling apart," said Amann. "The comedy is over the top in characterization, costumes, special and technical effects. It's a lot of fun, a real light-hearted, feel good play."

Day says he's had a few knocks in his life, and that's one of the appeals of this play.

"Everybody's world is an imperfect world," he said. "This play mimics life, how people feel trapped in a world that's not a perfect world."

He also likes the setting of the play, inside a renovated 1854 church in the City of Southfield's historic park.

"The audience is so close to the stage that it becomes almost interactive," he said. "You become part of the play."

Also appearing in the show are Ellen Atkins of West Bloomfield, Johan Boufford, Ron DeMang, and Mark Mutafian of Southfield, Karen Novak of Troy and Terie Spencer of Wixom.

What: SRO Productions presents *The Secret Affairs of Mildred Wild*.
When: Weekends, May 11-27. Curtain 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday 2 p.m. Sunday.
Where: In the renovated 1854 church at the City of Southfield'sburgh Historical Park on the northeast corner of Civic Center Dr. and Berg Road, one block east of Telegraph.
Tickets: \$10 adults, \$8 senior citizens and children, call (248) 827-0710 or (248) 827-0701.