

# ENTERTAINMENT

**B<sup>1</sup>**  
Eight Days a Week **B4**

## THE WEEKEND

FRIDAY



Leelee Sobieski plays an orphaned teen with suspicious guardians in "The Glass House," which opens in theaters today.

SATURDAY



Farmington Players' Andrew Young stars in "Bell, Book and Candle," 8 p.m. at West Bloomfield Civic Theater. Tickets \$13, call (248) 219-0800

SUNDAY



Tool (above) kicks into high gear with Meshuggah, 7:30 p.m. at The Palace of Auburn Hills. Tickets \$37.50, call (248) 645-6666.



See '70s rock legend Al Kooper at the Detroit Festival of the Arts, running 4-9 p.m. Friday and 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, Sept. 14-16, in Detroit's Cultural Center area. For details, call (313) 577-5088.



Grumpy old men: Frank Gorshin and Dick Van Patten go round and round about the placement of furniture as they rehearse an old routine in "The Sunshine Boys."

## The Sunshine Boys

Dick Van Patten and Frank Gorshin come together just for laughs



Bulletproof Simon: Dick Van Patten talks about the genius of Neil Simon back in the green room.

BY LINDA ANN CHOSIN  
STAFF WRITER  
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Frank Gorshin shuffles across the stage to set the position of the table in the middle of the set. Dick Van Patten matter-of-factly moves it back. Round and round they go in their roles as Al Lewis and Willie Clark. As the two grumpy old Vaudevillians rehearse for one final performance together, each remembers differently the staging for "The Sunshine Boys" doctor sketch.

One and one-half weeks into rehearsal, Van Patten and Gorshin seem to know their characters well enough to ad lib jabs at one another even when they forget lines. Neil Simon wrote the words of this hilarious comedy, but these veteran actors bring the slapstick humor and grumblers to life in a national touring production opening Saturday, Sept. 16 at the Ford Community & Performing Arts Center.

Back in the green room, Van Patten and Gorshin talk about the genius of Simon's fast moving script. Just like Lewis and Clark, the two throw barbs, but then out-of-character compliment each other.

It's hard to believe they've never worked together before. Even though both were in the movie, "The Joker is Wild," they were never on the set at the same time.

"The Sunshine Boys is a wonderful play as good as anything Neil Simon's ever written," said Van Patten. "My favorite part is a sketch from Vaudeville, the doctor is in. It's so old and corny. When the two of us get in a fight. This is just the way two old guys would fight. They did the sketch for 43 years in Vaudeville as The Sunshine Boys but have been holding a grudge and haven't spoken to each other for the last 11 years. The logic is so perfect."



The Riddler: Always the jokester, Frank Gorshin remembers his early years as an impressionist.

he said. "This show won a Pulitzer Prize for crying out loud. It's a real risk that he's taking. I'm honored to be a part of it."

Van Patten explained that Forbes decided to produce the play after seeing a performance of it in New York, he said.

"He said he saw it in New York and he was very moved and a lot of people will be able to relate to it. It's got a lot of laughs. It's very funny and it's also kind of a tearjerker as well. You really care about these people. 'Escanaba' is five guys in a deer camp. It's one of my

"Neil Simon is bullet proof," Gorshin quickly adds. "It's a pleasure to do his lines. I'm just worried about it coming together (on opening night)."

"Frank never leaves the stage from beginning to end," said Van Patten.

"You've got me scared now," Gorshin said.

Gorshin shouldn't worry though. He just came off the road from playing George Burns in a new one man play *Soy Goodnight, Grace*. For 3½ hours, Gorshin kept up the pace all by himself.

Van Patten and Gorshin are both professionals when it comes to the stage, film and television. Best known for his role as Tom Bradford in the long-running television series *Eight is Enough*, Van Patten acted in his first Broadway play at age 7. He went on to do 26 more productions on Broadway including three Pulitzer Prize winners, plus 30 feature films and 7 television series.

### The Sunshine Boys

What: Dick Van Patten and Frank Gorshin star in Neil Simon's hilarious comedy about two aging ex-Vaudevillians.

When: 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 15, and 4 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 16

Where: Ford Community & Performing Arts Center, 15801 Michigan Ave., east of the Southfield Freeway, Dearborn  
Tickets: \$28-\$33. Call (313) 943-2354

Please See **SUNSHINE, B2**

## THEATER

### Gem Theatre takes on 40-something drama

BY CHRISTINA FUDCO  
STAFF WRITER

When Guy Sanville took the job as director of the Gem Theatre's *Dinner with Friends*, producer Jim Forbes told him that he wanted to change the perception of the theater.

It had earned a reputation as offering lighter fare, such as the Jeff Daniels-penned plays *Tropical Pickle* and *Escanaba in da Moonlight*. Forbes, whose father Chuck owns the Gem, wanted to up the ante.

"He wanted to show people something that they hadn't seen there

before," Sanville explained. "I think we succeeded but we'll see."

The 2000 Pulitzer Prize-winning *Dinner With Friends*, which officially begins its open-ended run Friday, Sept. 14, carries a serious tone. It is the tale of two fortysomething couples — one who is trying to save their marriage while the other is divorcing.

"The whole theater community was just blown away when they read that they (the Gem) were doing the show. They usually do what's considered — it's no easier to do — lighter fare, musical revues, comedies and stuff like that,"

he said.

"This show won a Pulitzer Prize for crying out loud. It's a real risk that he's taking. I'm honored to be a part of it."

Sanville explained that Forbes decided to produce the play after seeing a performance of it in New York, he said.

"He said he saw it in New York and he was very moved and a lot of people will be able to relate to it. It's got a lot of laughs. It's very funny and it's also kind of a tearjerker as well. You really care about these people. 'Escanaba' is five guys in a deer camp. It's one of my

Please See **THEATER, B2**

### Dinner With Friends

When: Open-ended run begins Friday, Sept. 14.

Showtimes: Previews are 8 p.m. Friday, Sept. 14, 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 15, 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 16. Regular showtimes are 2 p.m. Wednesday, 8 p.m. Wednesday-Friday, 6 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, 9 p.m. Saturday, and 2 p.m. Sunday.

Where: Gem Theatre, 333 Madison Ave., Detroit.

Tickets: \$13.75-\$37.50, call Gem Theatre (313) 963-9800 or Ticketmaster at (248) 645-6666. See [www.gemtheatre.com](http://www.gemtheatre.com) for more information.