

THE WEEKEND



FRIDAY
Based on the story of Jack The Ripper, "From Hell" stars Johnny Depp and Heather Graham. It opens today in metro area theaters.



SATURDAY
Jane's Addiction reunites with openers Live, Stereo MC's, 7 p.m. at The Palace of Auburn Hills. Tickets \$45.50, call (248) 645-6666.



SUNDAY
Pilobolus dance company brings its gravity-defying leaps to Detroit's Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts for a 3 p.m. matinee. Tickets \$20-\$40, call (313) 963-2366.



HOT TICKET
The Alloy Orchestra returns to the Detroit Film Theatre to perform original soundtracks to classic films "The Lost World," "Speedy," "Metropolis" (pictured) and "Nosferatu" Oct. 19-21. Call for showtimes (313) 833-3237.



Playing it up: Actress Lorraine Sheldon (Brenda Lane) greets theater critic Sheridan Whiteside (Ran Van-Hoeck) with much sympathy and a kiss on the head after hearing about the fall that left him with a broken hip.

A night out with Schoolcraft College Theatre

A dinner invitation leads to comic madness

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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The Stanleys aren't laughing over the penguins in the library, octopus in the kitchen, and a telephone bill for more than \$784 as the lights go up on a Wednesday night rehearsal of *The Man Who Came to Dinner*.

James Hartman hopes audiences won't feel the same way when Schoolcraft College Theatre opens its season with the George Kaufman and Moss Hart comedy Friday, Oct. 26. Hartman hopes they'll find the well-to-do couple, caught up in a deplorable situation, amusing. The Stanleys invited Sheridan Whiteside to dinner six weeks ago and now they're suffering the consequences even though he was the one who slipped and fell.

A cast of oddball characters dash across the stage as Hartman sits anxiously in the nearly empty seats, wondering if after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks audiences will feel like laughing their way through the classic story about an arrogant theater critic who covered stars during the 1940s. Hartman hopes, as in seasons past, to sell out the house. The hilarious comedy would draw crowds at any other time.

"It's probably a nice time to have some laughter," said Hartman, director and professor of theater at the college. "It's two hours people can come in and have an enjoyable evening."

"We did it a number of years ago. Anytime you read it, it's a fun play full of wonderful characters who come to visit the theater critic during his infir-

mity. He's very demanding with lots of strange and unusual friends, and he receives many strange and unusual gifts. It's just hysterical with outlandish characters based on Harpo Marx and Tullulah Bankhead. That's what makes it fun because it's based on real people."

So far, Hartman's biggest worry, besides filling the house, was tailoring the set and props to the 1940s time frame. A fragmented stage set gives an openness while suggesting period and the wealth of the Stanleys. In between scenes Hartman uses music like Scott Joplin's *Maple Leaf Rag* and songs from the 1940s to set the mood.

"The cast has a wide mixture of experience and is comprised of actors from the community and students," said Hartman. "I think it's important to draw on experience of older actors, but even so there are challenges like getting an actor to stutter in a British accent, or getting them to slow down to add a dreamy quality, also obtaining 1940s clothing. When people donate to the theater department they usually give us contemporary clothing."

One element Hartman won't have to worry about is lead actor Ray VanHoeck. The Canton resident loves his character and is spending plenty of time with the script.

"Sheridan Whiteside's based on Alexander Wolcott, a friend of Hart and Kaufman," said VanHoeck, who played one of the lead characters in *On Golden Pond* last season. VanHoeck began acting only a couple of years ago after retiring from 40 years as a banker.

"He's kind of pompous, arrogant but ultimately

What: Schoolcraft College Theatre presents the comedy *The Man Who Came to Dinner*.

When: 6:30 p.m. Friday-Saturday, Oct. 26-27 and Nov. 2-3 as dinner theater, and 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, Nov. 9-10 performance only.

Where: Liberal Arts Theater at the college, 18600 Hagerty, between Six and Seven Mile roads, Livonia. **Tickets:** \$21 for dinner theater, \$10 performance only. Call (734) 462-4400, Ext. 5457.

proves to be a person with a heart. Being in the wheelchair is a big part of the role. They think he has a broken hip which is later discovered to be a mistake, but Whiteside continues to play it for all it's worth.

"One of the difficulties I had was learning how to maneuver the wheelchair. It taught me that just getting in

and of a door is a major undertaking, and you just can't push the door shut. It's also a challenge being on stage for a major portion of the play and trying to blend in with strong characters."

Brenda Lane plays one of those characters. Based on Tullulah Bankhead, her role calls for a colorful but dominant, almost smothering, personality.

"Lorraine Sheldon is a friend. She's a very flamboyant character, a movie star, stage actress, jet setter," said Lane, a Northville resident and co-owner of Bonfire Bistro in Northville Township.

Please See **SCHOOLCRAFT, B2**

FALL FESTIVAL

Time is running out for show of colors

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Christian Overland grew up in a family that wanted to learn how to grow apple cider with a hand press. Today, that's part of his job as director of Greenfield Village. Well, not really, but he still enjoys the turn every now and then. Most days he's busy planning the fall festival, which is such a fun time for everyone.

"It's a fun time for everyone. In the barn, a dinner, hot cider, doughnuts, kerosene lit wagon and storytelling for the children. It's lit and takes you back to the 19th century. During the day, a brilliant rainbow of trees light up the drabdest autumn in Michigan."

What: Celebrate fall at a colorful festival that transports visitors back in time.

Where: Greenfield Village, 20900 Oakwood Boulevard, Dearborn.

When: Through Wednesday, Oct. 31, hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Admission: \$8.50 to \$13.50, free for children under age 5. Call (313) 271-1620 or see www.hfmgv.org.

Highlight: Autumn Evenings at Firestone Farm 7-10 p.m. Friday-Saturday, Nov. 2-3 and 9-10. Tickets \$12, \$8 ages 5-12, \$6.75 for picnic dinner.

beech show their color.

"What's fun about this is you can go to different places. There's a lot of families that do it," said Overland. "The trees are a fire-red blaze. The sugar maples are peaking. There are fingers of yellow, orange and red that visitors can see on wagon rides that go through the village. There's a pumpkin patch. You can pick out a pumpkin, press some cider and take a wagon ride through the woods."

A Halloween program (Oct. 19-20 and 26-27) for members puts a temporary halt to Autumn Evenings but the fun doesn't stop. Fall Festival continues straight through to Oct. 31.

Oct. 19-20 is the Halloween event," said Overland. "It's a treat for the kids, a non-scary route for older kids and adults."



Days past: Angela Lowry cooks over an open fire hearth during Greenfield Village's Fall Festival.

Please See **COLORS, B3**