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MURDER BY NUMBERS (R)
UNFAITHFUL (R)

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THE ROOKIE (G)

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MURDER BY NUMBERS (R)
MY BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING (PG)
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6-9

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PANIC ROOM (R)

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Weathering time

Stagecrafters revive Gene Kelly classic

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
STAFF WRITER
lchomin@oe.homecomm.net

STAFF PHOTOS BY JERRY ZOLYNSKY

Gotta Dance: *Doug Clark, Kelly Janney and Dean Gaboury rehearse the roles Donald O'Connor, Debbie Reynolds and Gene Kelly played in the movie "Singin' in the Rain." Gaboury (below) and Mary Ann Redhage are Gene Kelly and Lina Lamont in the Stagecrafters production.*

When Dean Gaboury dances across the stage as the lead character in *Singin' in the Rain* he won't have to worry about slipping in a puddle. The Bloomfield Hills actor trades his tap shoes for ones with rubber soles before the first rain drop falls in the Stagecrafters musical opening Friday, May 24 at the historic Baldwin Theatre in Royal Oak. Based on the film starring, directed and choreographed by Gene Kelly, the production features new choreography by Valerie Mould and assistant director John Luther of Farmington.

Gaboury plays Don Lockwood, Kelly's character in the movie celebrating 50 years of popularity.

"We've only run rain once. It's a lot of fun but for the moment the rain's cold," said Gaboury who performs four tap numbers in the show. "They're talking about filling the drum with hot water a couple of hours before the show starts."

It's Dolly Scheibelhut's job to eliminate any problems created by the famous scene where Kelly swung around lamp posts as he tapped through the street after dark. That hasn't always been easy. It takes four crew members just to move the rain machine incorporated into the set to the front of the stage. After the rain falls and gathers in the gutters, they must mop up the water before moving the set back.

Scheibelhut's spent hours learning about the system that re-circulates the rain water back to a 55-gallon drum. So far, none has ended up in the pit, where the 12-member orchestra will sit, but another area of the theater was not as lucky.

"The first time we made it rain, it flooded the basement where costumers work," said Scheibelhut, Stagecrafters treasurer and one of the costumers for the 25-member cast. "It's quit leaking in the basement now.

"I'm happy we resolved the problem because this theater was built in 1922 as a Vaudeville house that members worked very hard to restore after a fire."

Purchased from a theater group in Grand Rapids a year ago, the rain machine sets the mood for the boy meets girl, boy falls in love and uses all his powers of persuasion to ensure a happy ending.

"It's a funny script," said director David McIntosh of Beverly Hills. "It still makes me laugh. It takes place in 1927 when *The Jazz Singer*, Al Jolson's talkie movie came out and the silent movie business knew they had to adapt. Lina is a big silent movie star and she had a horrible voice. We're incorporating a film portion that shows the progression from silent film to talkie.

"I love the scene where Lina is trying to aim her voice toward the microphone. It made me laugh in auditions; it makes me laugh now."

Mary Ann Redhage has as much fun playing the part of the fictitious movie queen as the audience does watching her strut through the play in a flashy white flapper costume.

"She's the epitome of annoying, completely full of herself," said Redhage, who acted in her first play at Troy High School before going on to study theater at Wayne State University. "Her looks have gotten her through life. She's not able to make the transition because of her voice and she's in love with her co-star Don Lockwood. It's the role of a lifetime. There are big Broadway numbers and the rain is something people don't expect to see on stage. If people enjoyed the movie, they'll love being up close and watching it rain at night."

Kelly Janney and her late father loved the movie. That's why she's thrilled to be playing Don Lockwood's love interest.

"As a kid I watched the movie with my father. He's gone now, so it's very special," said Janney, a Rochester Hills resident. "It's like a dream to perform in it.

The three of us (Gaboury and Doug Clark, who plays Donald O'Connor's character in the movie) are friends off stage and it helps the chemistry on stage. The movie and music are incredibly famous. It's going to get applause."

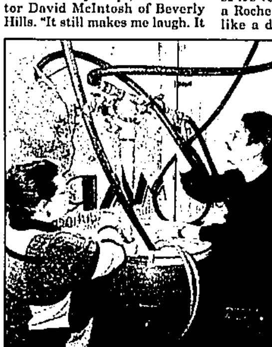
"I think the audience will see this explosion of music on stage," added Clark who puts all of his dance lessons to use in the part. "The audience doesn't expect it for community theater."

Bob Czaplicki's sound design sets the mood for the upbeat show and scene where the Gene Kelly character twirls his umbrella while laying down fancy footwork.

"There's a tremendous amount of sound effect – rain, thunder," said Czaplicki, a Plymouth resident who's worked with the Plymouth Theatre Guild. "The hardest part as a sound designer is you can't have as many microphones as people so you try to group these body mikes around the leads. There are also floor mikes and shotgun mikes projecting from the walls in the house, all controlled by a brand new sound board with 16 adjustments for each mike. This is the first practice to hear how Don sounds singing in the rain so I can make all the tonal characteristics blend."

Scheibelhut said Czaplicki's behind-the-scenes contribution is what makes the 300-member Stagecrafters community theater group a sell-out with audiences. Next season, promises to top this one with five main stage productions which include the musicals *Pirates of Penzance*, *Chicago* and *A Secret Garden*, 2nd Stage productions of contemporary shows – *How I learned to Drive*, *Floyd Collins* and *Cowgirl*, and for younger audiences the musical *Pippy Longstocking*. But first, *Peter Plan* flies into the theater for a July production.

"Some members never set foot on stage," said Scheibelhut. "We're always looking for people to join. We always need people to help."



Rainmakers: *Dolly Scheibelhut and director David McIntosh make sure the rain machine is ready for the famous dance scene.*

Singin' in the Rain

What: Stagecrafters celebrate the 50th anniversary of Gene Kelly's classic movie with a stage version of the popular boy meets girl story

When: 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, May 24-25 and Thursday-Saturday, May 30-June 1, June 6-8 and Friday-Saturday, June 14-15, and 2 p.m. Sunday, May 26, June 2, 9 and 16. Friday, June 14 signed performance for the deaf

Where: Baldwin Theatre, 415 South Lafayette, Royal Oak

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