

## THEATER

FROM PAGE B1

"I try and synthesize and make theatrical the issues of the work and the work they do. It's an unusual piece. We've been standing room only when we've done the show. Extraordinary dialogue has taken place afterwards."

An award winning British actress and director, Eaton knew from the beginning she had her work cut out for her but she's directed controversial plays like Jewish Ensemble Theatre's production of *Romeo & Juliet* before. The Shakespearean tragedy took on new meaning when the setting was relocated to Jerusalem and the young lovers became Arab and Jewish.

So, over the summer Eaton decided to use improv and storytelling to uncover the points of interest she wanted to include in *When Can We Talk?* The nine-member cast includes ex-inmates and project volunteers. Music is by folk singer Josh White Jr.

"It's social theater - less a play and more of an event with dialogue. There are personal stories that represent various issues - the bad choices that people make, good choices that people make, the problems of going in, being in and coming out once you've been branded a criminal in our society. It's a collage of stories with the actors all doing their own stories. It's very courageous of them to speak aloud and own up to certain things."

"Every audience will have different responses. Part of the play's purpose is to encourage the audience to give us feedback and begin a dialogue. We're hoping people will come with an open mind and see the human beings behind the issues. One of the cast members is on a tether under electronic surveillance because he's still on parole. It demonstrates the pressure on people coming back into society. I learned an enormous amount doing this. I was impressed by the courage it takes for someone who's committed a felony, served their time to realize everything is stacked against them. I'm in awe of the resilience and it's given me a new understanding of redemption - that people can change, that we can all change."



PHOTO BY LAURA LEA LEWIS/EDGER

The Prison Creative Arts Project explores the impact of prison on a person's life in their latest production *When Can We Talk?* Music is by Josh White Jr. (left).

The cast of *Agents and Assets* brings America's drug policies home.

## AGENTS AND ASSETS

John Malpede is hoping all American citizens make the effort to research and come to their own conclusions about the country's drug policies instead of remaining complacent about the issue.

The Los Angeles Poverty Department production, *Agents and Assets* Thursday-Sunday, Oct. 17-20, at First Unitarian-Universalist Church of Detroit, is meant to give them some place to start.

"Agent and Assets is about drug policy and focuses on the transcript of a Congressional hearing. The stage is set up like a hearing room with men

and women in suits. It's theatricalized but follows the 1998 hearing transcript on the CIA Inspector General's report denying allegations made in a newspaper article that there was CIA involvement in crack cocaine trafficking. The subject is whether the operatives in a South American operation were involved.

"After each show we talk about drug policy. It creates a forum for these issues. It enhances civic participation. It's what makes democracy work."

Malpede has been trying to motivate citizens ever since he founded the Los Angeles Poverty Department in 1985.

The performance group tackles such topics as homelessness. To impart a sense of realism, Malpede cast his first production with actors who were living or had lived on the streets. Malpede originally was a performance artist living in New York when he decided to write on the homeless. A short time later he moved to LA.

The latest performance project premiered in January 2001 in LA. The Detroit cast features six of the actors from that production and eight from Detroit, some of whom are in Mariner's Inn drug recovery program for addicts. The Saturday night performance is a benefit to help fund the services provided by Mariner's Inn in Detroit.

"LAPD theater is from Skid Row LA," said Malpede. "In LA, because the area we work in is completely transformed by drugs, the question is whether or not foreign policy priorities and domestic priorities work to eliminate the problem. The war on drugs, the money goes into prisons instead of programs to help an addict recover."

Have an interesting idea for a story? Call Observer & Eccentric arts reporter Linda Ann Chomin at (734) 953-2145 or send e-mail to lchomin@oe.homecomm.net

## CLARIFICATION

The location of The Pumpkin Factory was inadvertently left out of a recent story about Halloween activities.

The Pumpkin Factory, 48651 Harris, Belleville, offers hayrides through a haunted cornfield, a haunted house, sweet cider and homemade doughnuts, homemade pump-

kin pies, candy or caramel apples, costumes, masks and makeup and lots of decorating items, including corn stalks, gourds and Indian corn.

The Pumpkin Factory is open 9:30 a.m.-8:30 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 9:30 a.m. to midnight, Friday and Saturday. (734) 461-1835.

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## SOCIAL THEATER

Prison Creative Arts Project presents *When Can We Talk?* 8 p.m. Friday, Oct. 25, at the Plymouth Community Arts Council, 774 North Sheldon at Junction. Tickets are \$25. Call (734) 416-4278

Los Angeles Poverty Department performs *Agents and Assets* 8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, Oct. 17-19, and 4 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 20, at First Unitarian-Universalist Church of Detroit, 4605 Cass Avenue at Forest. Tickets are \$5 or pay what you can. No one will be turned away for lack of funds. For reservations and information, call (313) 671-3583

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Photographs by Kijuro Yahagi

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## Workshop takes singing out of the shower

Wouldn't it be wonderful to have the confidence to perform a solo in your church or sing with your friends at a party without the familiar fear of embarrassing yourself?

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ly activity. Topics include resonance, breath control, relaxation, articulation, and style.

The fee is \$75 for each workshop being held 6:30-9:30 p.m. Monday, Oct. 21, and 4-7 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 27, at Village Music, 100 East Liberty, Plymouth. For more information, call (734) 354-9825.

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Glass sculpture  
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Celeste North

Observer & Eccentric

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WIN TICKETS TO SEE

## WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION

Seventeen FBI detectives go to London to investigate the murder of a woman who was the only witness to the murder of a man. The case is a mystery and the detectives must solve it. The case is a mystery and the detectives must solve it. The case is a mystery and the detectives must solve it.