

Bear is in the house

New production shows kids there's a first time for everything

BY LANA MIKI
STAFF WRITER

Kids, get ready to jump in the aisles and dance the cha-cha.

Moms and dads, get ready to hear them shout answers to questions asked by a shaggy, gentle, smart, 7-foot-tall bear who expects audience participation.

Bear in the Big Blue House is a live production coming to the Masonic Temple for nine shows March 27-30. It's based on the popular Jim Henson TV series of the same name. The theme of the musical is "A first time for everything."

AT A GLANCE

What: *Bear in the Big Blue House Live*: A first time for everything
Where: Masonic Temple, 500 Temple Ave., Detroit
When: Thursday-Sunday, March 27-30
Shows: 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. Thursday-Friday, March 27-28; 10:30 a.m., 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. Saturday, March 29; 2 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. Sunday, March 30
Tickets: \$9 to \$24, available at the Fisher Theater Box office and all Ticketmaster locations including Marshall Field's. Call (313) 832-2232 during the week of the show or visit the Web site www.bearinthebigbluehouselive.com

Bear in the Big Blue House is a two-time Emmy Award winning show that airs three times a day on the Disney Channel. More than 10 million viewers tune in monthly.

A new motherly character, Sarah Mann, was added to Bear's entourage in the live production.

Rebecca Shubart, University of Michigan School of Dance graduate, is the first person to portray the role.

"It's an amazing experience to be the first person to play Sarah Mann because it means I will be the model for her and I have the opportunity to help shape her personality," Shubart said. Like Bear, Sarah Mann is a parental figure. We work as peers to teach kids that everything is going to be OK, that it can be a scary world but everything will be OK.

The show also features, of course, Bear, who dances a mean cha-cha, Noel MacNeal is the voice and spirit of Bear.

Other characters include Tutter, a blue, spunky and independent mouse; Pip & Pop, fun purple ottens who cause chaos; Twelo, a green lemur who likes to collect feathers; Ojo, a girl bear whose imagination takes her to wonderful places; Luna the Moon, Bear's oldest and wisest friend; and Shadow, a friendly girl shadow who loves to sing and tell stories to animals of the forest.

"Tutter learns about overcoming fears of the first day of school," Shubart said. "Ojo tries to ride a bike without training wheels. ... They all learn that there is a first time for everything and that it's scary, but it can also be exciting."

"Pip & Pop spend the whole show trying to figure out what their 'first time' will be. Children can relate to this 'first time' theme."

Kids really participate in



Pictured far right is U of M graduate Rebecca Shubart who plays Sarah Mann, one of the "Hugh-Mann's" in *Bear and the Big Blue House*. Mann and Bear help lead kids through the adventures of life.

Test your kid's Bear trivia knowledge

What is Tutter the mouse's favorite food?
Cheese!
What is Bear's favorite dance?
Cha-cha
What is the name of Bear's friend, the sun?
Ray
What is the name of the woods where Bear lives?
Woodland Valley

How old is Tutter?
Two
What is Twelo's favorite food?
Bananas
What is Pip and Pop's favorite food?
Clams
Who does Bear talk to at the end of each day?
Luna the moon, his oldest friend

Nickelodeon programs and says Bear is a highlight. She's looking forward to the nationwide tour.

His boyfriend is stage manager for a touring production of *Grease*. They visit the same cities, but usually miss each other.

So to keep in touch, they tape love notes under backstage tables when performing at the same entertainment venue.

"There is filled with magic on and off-stage for me," said Shubart. "It's a great show that seems to be gaining momentum."

Shubart has hosted several

children ages 2-8. Bear's other tour, *Double Dare*, has been on the road for more than three years. It's unknown how long *Big Blue House* will run.

The shows are part of Vee Corporation; the same entertainment team that produces *Sesame Street Live!*

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Kodo
Mon 3/24 8 pm
Tue 3/25 8 pm
Wed 3/26 8 pm
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Susan Graham
mezzo-soprano
Mon 3/28 8 pm
Lydia Mendelsohn Theatre • Ann Arbor
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Takács Quartet and Muzsikás
Sat 3/29 8 pm
Rockham Auditorium • Ann Arbor
The Takács Quartet returns with the popular Hungarian gypsy ensemble, Muzsikás, for a program of chamber music with Hungarian influences. Muzsikás traces Hungarian melodies back to their roots in the villages of Transylvania, performing the folk songs that inspired the conventional chamber music works of Bartók and Kodály performed on this program.
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Muzsikás
Featuring Márta Sebestyén
Sun 3/30 4 pm
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For a complete list of the 2003 Season Plus Present the Rockham Office
www.rockham.com MGT 181 7 PM

Evening at the Apollo On Tour
Fri 4/4 8 pm
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Sat 4/5 8 pm
Detroit Center Theater • Detroit
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"Symbols of Suffering"
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Michigan League • Kearsley Room
UM School of Music
UMS ARTIST INTERVIEW: Susan Graham
Sat 3/29 11 am
Stearns Building • Lady Room
UM School of Music
For more information, please call the UMS Education Department at 734.615.6739, email umsted@umich.edu, or visit our website at www.ums.org

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