

# One-Act Is Authoritative Account Of Sanity Trial

By TIM RICHARD

Last weekend was the 125th anniversary of the wedding of Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd of Lexington, Ky. It also marked the premier performance of Robert Wall's authoritative one-act drama "A Thin Line," whose title comes from Mrs. Lincoln's remark about the thin line between sanity and mental illness.

If Bob Wall's name sounds familiar, it's because his notable plume, Wally Roberts, appeared in Observer Newspapers for many years as reviewer for the column "Curtain Going Up." He has written and directed many comedies, but this was his first crack at writing a heavier drama. He also directed its performance with the Dearborn Players Guild.

I'm biased as a reviewer. I like Bob Wall as big-minded, technically knowledgeable character. I like the author's blown literary style of Crockett and Lincoln, Brann and Twain, Bierce and Mencken. I cover a lot of politics, have sympathy for politicians' wives, and often wondered about the insanity trial of Mary Todd Lincoln.

"ANYTHING" written prior

to 1950 - including Sherwood Anderson's "Ab Lincoln in Illinois"; it is erroneous; it was based on Herndon." Wall told me in the lobby. William Herndon was Lincoln's law partner in Springfield and afterwards spread a lot of malicious tales about the couple's teuding.

I remarked at the authenticity of the literary style, and Wall revealed that 90 per cent of the lines were drawn directly from life - trial transcripts, letters, quoted conversations, even a nasty lampoon young Lincoln and his fiancée wrote about a Democratic politician in the Illinois statehouse.

Not that it's a documentary. The version we saw is the fifth rewrite, and Wall is still talking about adding a short transitional passage at one point.

THAT MARY Lincoln was mentally ill one doesn't doubt. What's difficult is to tag her with the cruel jargon of the legal business - "insanity" and "lunacy." One suspects that modern tranquilizers and hormones, which ladies in our suburbs take as a matter of course today, might have saved the emancipator's first lady the humiliation of two trials and a year in an asylum.

Briefly, "A Thin Line" is an account of her first trial, a flashback to her happy days in the White House, and scenes from her declining years (she died in 1882). Her husband was assassinated, and three of her four sons die young. In conversations with No. 1 son Robert, she talks normally for awhile, then screeches hysterically about money, dangers to his life and the like. She holds conversations with the veil of her loving husband, symbolized on stage by a phallic-looking bust on a pedestal.

WALL'S PLAY is available to local community theater groups. It requires a singer-guitarist (authentic music between scenes, two women, two men and an off-stage voice).

It requires a minimum of scenery but a maximum of lighting techniques. Wall calls it "space staging with pools of light" and has 70 different light cues in the one-hour drama, so some of our groups may be unable to do it.

A good play evokes all sorts of thoughts that vary between persons. Myself, I thought of Jackie Kennedy Onassis and wished the pulp movie mags and the hounds of the European press corps would leave the poor woman the hell alone.



A DRAMA of four men locked in a prison cell will be staged by San Quentin paroloes Friday, Nov. 19, at 8 p.m., in Clarenceville High School, Middle Belt between Seven and Eight Mile. The play, "The Cage," is being presented by student activities board of Schoolcraft College. Tickets are on sale at the college, the Village Green in the Wonderland Shopping Center, Wayne State University and Henry Ford Community College.

## Drama Of Prison Life To Be Staged For SCC

A different kind of stage play - written, produced and performed by San Quentin prison paroloes - will be presented by Schoolcraft College at a single performance Nov. 19.

"The Cage" is a biting drama of four men locked in a cell. Its author, Rick Clueby, was sentenced to prison 14 years ago at age 21 without possibility of parole.

He plays "Hatchet" in the performance scheduled for Clarenceville High School's L.E. Schmitt Auditorium, Curtain time is 8 p.m. The school is located on Middle Belt Road between Seven and Eight Mile in Livonia.

About "The Cage," his transformation into the ultimate victim of the prison system is complete. Tickets are \$1 for students and \$2 for the general public. They can be purchased at the college, the Village Green in the Wonderland Shopping Center, at Wayne State University and at Henry Ford Community College.

Mail orders will be accepted. Checks should be made payable to Schoolcraft College and orders sent to 18600 Haggerty, Livonia 48151.

"The Cage" is a present-time of Schoolcraft's student activities board.

## Rock Club Plans Sale

The Roamin Rock and Mineral Club will hold a challenge rock auction at its meeting tonight (Nov. 10) in Room B, Senior Citizens Building, Five Mile and Farmington Roads, Livonia. Registrations of specimens will be between 7 and 7:30 p.m.

The donor of the rock which receives the most money in bids will be the winner of a permanent trophy and will keep the traveling trophy for a year.

Specimens must be those found by the donors, may only be cleaned by brushing with soap and water, must be identified as to the name of the mineral and the location where found.

Bids levels will be in steps of 10 cents or more. A children's table will also be set up and bidding will be from one cent and up. A junior trophy will be awarded.

Bid awards will be made at the club's banquet in January.

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## amusements

### 'Flute' Will Be Staged

ANN ARBOR All the fantasy and witchcraft of Mozart's opera "The Magic Flute" will come alive again on the stage of the Mendelsohn Theatre when the University of Michigan School of Music and department of art jointly produce the popular opera.

Performances will be given

## Westland Artists Will Participate

Three Westland area residents will be among more than 60 artists and craftsmen who will display their works in Northville Nov. 12 and 13.

They will take part in the second annual Tivoli Fair being held in Northville Methodist Church under auspices of the Northville Historical Society.

The artists are Mrs. Mary Mattingly, who will display pressed flowers; Mrs. Betty Lou Wotrung, who will display oil and acrylic paintings; and Mrs. Ann Gentry, who will display figures made from dough.

Purpose of the fair is to raise money for the preservation and restoration of the 150-year-old former Henry building in Northville. The building, currently being used as the Northville Township Hall, is located on a site slated for a shopping center development.

Hours of the fair will be from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Friday and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday.

## Society Meets

The Detroit Society for Genealogical Research, Inc., will hold a meeting Saturday, Nov. 13, at 2 p.m., in the Explorer's Room, Detroit Public Library.

## Nov. 19, 20, 22 and 23, with curtain time at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$3 each with a limited number available at \$1.50 for university students.

Due perhaps to the superb blending of mystery, romance and comedy, "The Magic Flute" has long been a favorite of opera-goers everywhere. Its score is regarded by many critics as one of Mozart's finest.

"A godlike magic breathes through this score," said Wagner who called it the quintessence of art. The production will be created by conductor Josef Blatt and stage director Ralph Herbert, who are collaborating on their 21st opera at Michigan. Sets are by Robert Ferguson, "Wagtail" of the University Players.

Tickets may be ordered by sending a check to School of Music Opera, Mendelsohn Theatre, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104. A self-addressed, stamped envelope must be enclosed.

## Musical To Open At U-M

ANN ARBOR Individual tickets are now on sale for the University of Michigan's Professional Theatre Program "Play of the Most Serious" by Howard Zinn.

However, due to an outstanding subscription sale, only a limited number of individual tickets will be available for each of the five top touring attractions in the series to be held at the new Power Center for the Performing Arts.

Tickets are on sale in the Mendelsohn Theatre box office, which is open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2 to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, as well as at Hudson's & Grinnell's.

Because of popular demand, the run of the first attraction, "The Me Nobody Knows," has been extended to four performances, Nov. 12 to 14, including a Sunday matinee. An equally good musical, it recently received seven Tony nominations in New York.

The series also includes the comedy-drama "Butterflies Are Free," Dec. 9 to 11; Neil Simon's comedy, "Last of the Red Hot Lovers," Feb. 3 to 5; the musical "Company," March 18 and 19; and Burt Bacharach's musical "Promises, Promises," April 8 and 9. "Canterbury Tales," originally scheduled for Nov. 14, has been canceled.

## More Fails To Amuse, But Recruits Do Well

CAST

- "A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS"
  - The Common Man... THOMAS B. JENSEN
  - St. Thomas More... HOWARD ZINN
  - Master Richard Rich... MICHAEL ANDREW MINER
  - The Duke of Norfolk... JOHN H. NAPER
  - Lady Alice More... MARY BENSON
  - Lady Margaret More... KATHLEEN GANNEY
  - (Lighting)... JON BENSON
  - Thomas Cromwell... JAMES S. NEWELL
  - William Charles, the Spanish Ambassador... JEFFREY D. RODMAN
  - William Roper... JAMES CORRIGAN
  - King Henry VIII... DAVID MACENULTY
  - A Woman... MIMI CARR
  - Thomas Cromwell, Archdeacon of Canterbury... JAMES RYAN
  - In repository at the Hilberry Classic Theatre, Wayne State University, 7243 Oak, Detroit. By Robert Bolt. Directed by Don Blasky.

might be the fine acting of Jensen, who brings out the ascetic side of More's character admirably (the voice and penetrating gaze are reminiscent of Bishop Sheen), but somehow fails to bring off More's famed wit. "This didn't occur to me until the final trial scene when More examines the meditation of a perjuring witness, learns he has become attorney general of Wales and tells him: "Rich, a man might sell his soul and gain the whole world - but for Wales!" The audience howls at this as it should have been able to howl at many of the earlier lines. More is modern because he declines to cave in to a king's policy he considers morally wrong. He is extremely old-fashioned in the trust he

places in the law and his own ability to keep within the law. Unfortunately, despite the lies you hear from the bar association every May 1, we British and Americans have a government of men, not of laws. Laws are useless when men disregard them, and Sir Thomas More went to the chopping block for failing to figure that out. As the anthropologists say, "The proper study of man is man" - not law. But I digress. "A Man for All Seasons" fails to come off, to cliché, despite all the good things going for it. Perhaps it was only a bad night when the electricity wasn't in the air and the spirits weren't right. One hates to discourage a potential patron of the excellent Hilberry repertoire.

## Stamp Club To Show Color Film

"Stamps: A Nation's Calling Card," a color film produced by the U.S. Postal Service, will be shown at the next meeting of the West Suburban Stamp Club. The meeting is scheduled for Friday, Nov. 19, at 7:30 p.m., in the Plymouth Community Credit Union, 500 S. Harvey, Plymouth. Members are asked to note that this meeting is on Friday instead of the usual Thursday.

For its meeting, Friday, Dec. 3, the club has planned a talk by Peter Smith of Ann Arbor, on the topic "Railway Post Offices in Michigan." Plans are also being made for a benefit auction and Christmas party on Dec. 17.

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