

At New Center

Stars Shine, But 'Harp' Doesn't

By BETTY MASSON

"The Grass Harp" proved to be a frail reed for a lot of fine talent Tuesday evening at the gala opening of the Power Center for the Performing Arts.

Truman Capote's weeping willow novel just doesn't come off as a musical because there's no depth to the characterization and no real story.

But the new \$3.5 million center certainly is a sign of an exciting future for the performing arts, especially for those of us in Observerland who much prefer the drive to Ann Arbor over the battle of the Detroit freeways. And it's a much shorter walk from the covered parking lot right into the new building than it is to any Detroit auditorium.

IN TURNING OVER the center to the University of Michigan, former U-M regent Eugene B. Power, representing the family whose gift paid for most of the center, stressed that it was to be a "regional center for the performing arts."

"The need has been clear for many years," he said. Existing facilities on the campus are either too large or too small, and are certainly not geared for the whole range of performing arts, music, ballet, dance, drama, opera and films.

The center has been designed for versatility, with an austerity which may dismay lovers of the rococo or early American, but with a practicality and functionalism which will really make "the play the thing."

With the future very much in mind, the theater has a backstage loading ramp which will make it easy for



A REFLECTING GLASS-WALLED lobby mirrors Felch Park in the newest addition to the University of Michigan campus, the Power Center for the Performing Arts. The center was officially opened Tuesday evening.

visiting troupes to bring in their paraphernalia.

A convertible stage arrangement will lend itself to the variety of performances scheduled for the center. The orchestra pit is a platform which is raised to convert the more conventional proscenium stage into a thrust stage.

The new center seats 1,420 persons, but intimacy is achieved through widening the seating area, and no seat is further than 72 feet from the stage.

"WHAT WAS ONCE a dream is now a splendid reality," said Dr. Harlan Hatcher, former president of the U of M, in paying tribute to Robert Schnitzer and Marcella Cliney for directing the University's Professional Theatre Program over the past 10 years.

According to Dr. Hatcher, "America can no longer be

dependent on a few Broadway ways for its performing arts."

"The Grass Harp" will be the 20th PTP production to go from Ann Arbor to New York. Some have made it big, some orchestra pit is a platform which is raised to convert the more conventional proscenium stage into a thrust stage.

As indicated, in its present form "The Grass Harp" will not.

BUT THERE WERE certainly some brighter moments in the production. Carol Brice, for instance, playing Catherine Creek, the Talbo's lovable, astringent "Mammy," she's both an outstanding singer and an extremely likable actress.

On the faculty at the University of Oklahoma, she will, one hopes, return to Ann Arbor in a better vehicle for her talents.

Celeste Holm, billed as star of the show, played the role of the faith healer with a weakness for blue-eyed men. What she did, she did

adequately, but her part as written was very weak.

Ruth Ford as the money-hungry sister also had a weak part, but she overpowered it. Barbara Cook, musically and visually, was a delight as the "good" sister.

ALSO DELIGHTFUL were the Pride 'n' Joys, Duke Henderson, Drew Allison, Mary Gail Fisher, Lorel Janiszewski, Ezra Litwak, Dale Weston, Deborah Midgley and Kathleen Miller, who played Miss Holm's blue-eyed children.

All Ann Arbor youngsters, they've appeared in 20 productions for the Ann Arbor Junior Light Opera, and rumor has it they'll be going to New York when "The Grass Harp" plays at the Martin Beck Theatre.

I wouldn't count on a long stay if I were they, but they augur well for the future of the theater and the future of home-grown talent.

amusements

Cathy Johnson Stars At Club

DETROIT Telegraph, for an indefinite engagement starting Monday, Oct. 11.

Bob Monti will back Cathy in night clubs across the nation and overseas, returns on the electric guitar. He also to the 24 Karat Club, 16890

New Music Concert Set

ANN ARBOR Rackham Lecture Hall will be open to the public without charge.

The first of four concerts of the 1971-72 season of Contemporary Directions entitled, "Music for Instruments I," will be presented by the composition department of the University of Michigan's School of Music on Saturday (Oct. 9).

The 8 p.m. concert at

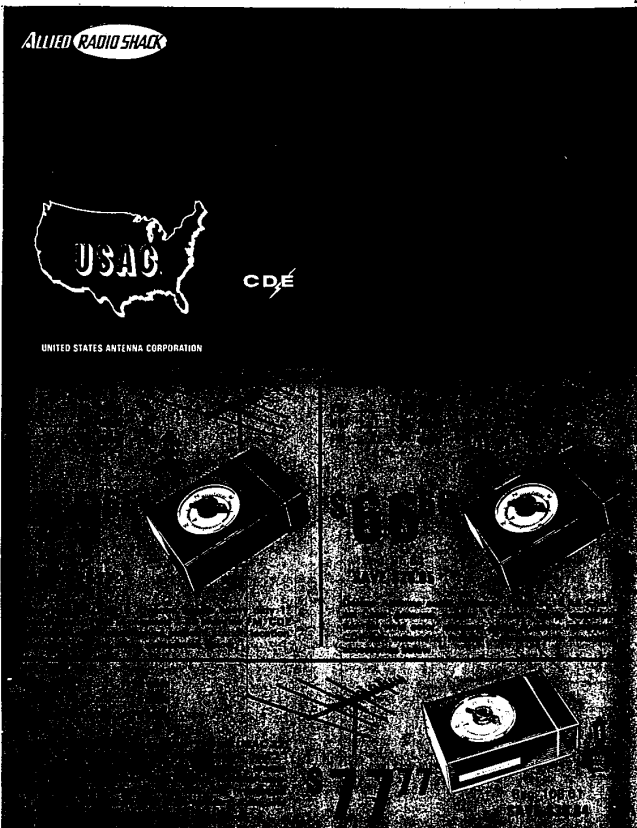
Other Contemporary Directions concerts have been scheduled for Nov. 13 ("The New Dialecticism"), Feb. 5 ("Music for Instruments II," March 25 ("Electronic and Media").

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J.P. Foote

Is Director Players Choose Cast For Comedy

James P. Foote of Southfield is director of the play "The Time of Your Life," scheduled to open Nov. 4 in the Auditorium, 8200 W. Outer Drive, Detroit.

The play is being staged by the speech and drama department of Mercy College of Detroit. Foote is associate professor.

Other Southfield area residents in the cast include Mary Kathryn Hoffman as "Kitty Duval," Leo J. Compilant as "Tom" and David G. Cylkowski as "The Society Man."

The play will run through Nov. 7. Curtain time is 8 p.m. For reservations, phone the department.



DICK BENSEK

The banquet was a success. It had been delightful. The guests had gorged themselves. But while the slaves laughed outside, the host wandered sadly within. Suddenly he went to his room, took a deadly dose of poison, and fell to the floor, unconscious. So died the Roman Apicius, well-known gourmand, and author of one of the most successful cookbooks in history. And why? The elegant banquet had cost him one hundred million sesterces; it left him a poor man. Let that be a lesson to all prospective banquet-givers! A small number of foods well-cooked is enough to please any guest. Opulence is not necessary. Too bad Apicius died before someone could tell him.

We offer a variety of well-cooked foods for satisfying meals. See us soon at DANISH INN, 32308 Grand River Ave., 476-5320. We have a 33-entree menu for your enjoyment, and our four most popular dishes are: Danish Inn Special Frikadeller, Roast Prime Rib of Beef, Dover Sole with Almondine and Viking Sword. Hours: 11 a.m. - 2 a.m. with dinners during the week until 10 p.m., Fri. and Sat. until 1 a.m. closed Sundays.

HELPFUL HINT: Why not put last night's left-over salad in today's lunch box? It's a good way to spark up that noon meal.

A Farmington Players favorite, Stuart Orman, has been chosen to play the Rev. Lionel Troop in their production of "See How They Run," set for performances the first three weekends in November.

The story is a delightful farce taking place in a small English village in modern times.

Peggy Sisto will play Ida, a plain but likeable young village girl. Kattie Beddow has been cast as Miss Skillion, a rather sour spinster, and Mike Cullen, as the intruder.

The two Americans who appear on the scene are played by Bob Gregory and Deborah Messer. Gregory is cast as Corp. Clive Winton, a dashing Air Force pilot, and Miss Messer, as Penelope Toop, pretty young wife of the Vicar.

Also cast in the play are Sal Sisto as the Bishop of Lax, John Barrett as the Rev. Arthur Humphrey and Pete

Turgeon as Sgt. Towers, a gruff man of order. Tickets for the Nov. 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 19 and 20 performances are available by calling Eleanor or Dale Johnson, 2425 Locust, Farmington. The play will be staged in the Players Barn, 12 Mile, between Orchard Lake and Farmington Roads.

Art Curator To Give Talk

DETROIT Almost as brilliant today as when created more than 3,000 years ago, the vivid wall paintings of Egyptian tombs will be shown and described by William H. Peck, curator of ancient art at the Detroit Institute of Arts Tuesday, Oct. 12, at 8 p.m.

Peck spent three months earlier this year researching the paintings under a fellowship of the American Research Center in Egypt. There will be an admission charge.

4 Wheelers Plan Outing

The Michigan Four Wheel Drive Association is sponsoring a three-day four-wheeling weekend in northern Michigan in the peak of the color season, Oct. 15, 16 and 17.

The event will be held near Cadillac, at Mitchell State Park, and will include trail

rides and a bonfire Saturday evening.

Those interested in attending weekend in northern Michigan, 936 Ireland Ave., Muskegon, 49441, or the trip leader, John Wohlschlag, 524 S. Rosemary, Lansing.

Camping and motel accommodation will be available.

Writers To Confer At Oakland

Local authors will join writers and editors from throughout the U.S. at Oakland University, Rochester, on Saturday, Oct. 16, for the 10th annual conference on the Craftsmanship of Creative Writing.

Mrs. Robert B. (Phyllis) Green of Fitzgerald, Livonia, and Mrs. Harold (Elsie) Price of Northville are co-chairmen in charge of staffing for the event. Anyone wishing to attend should call the conference department at OU.

Forty working writers will discuss their writing techniques during the conference, which is co-sponsored by Detroit Women Writers and OU's division of continuing education.

The keynote speaker will be Hayes B. Jacobs, author of "Writing and Selling Non-Fiction." He is also director of writing workshops at the New School in New York City.

Novelist Alison Lurie, author "Real People," will highlight the first of three sessions in which conferees can choose round tables on fiction, non-fiction, poetry and drama.

Other out-of-town speakers include nationally-syndicated columnist Ellen Peck, editors Joan Kahn of Harper and Row, Richard Grossman of Viking Press, Norma Ainsworth of Scholastic Magazines and Virginia McFarland of Poet Lore.

DiGiorgio Has Musical Role

Pietro DiGiorgio, drama director at Garden City East High School, is currently playing the role of Bellamy in "The Fantasticks" now featured weekends (Friday and Saturday evenings) in Will-O-Way Theatre, 775 W. Long Lake, Bloomfield Hills.

Leah Casara of Westland is understudying the role of Luisa.

The nostalgic musical about a boy, a girl, two fathers and a wall, is playing through Oct. 23. Reservations may be made by calling the theater.

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