



Miles Baum is taunted by Peter Orman in the 'William's Doll' skit.



Nichole Sarkisian gets a make-up assist from Mary Lou Bomerito, one of the mothers who assisted in last-minute preparations.



Lisa Grzowski, Kathy Klein and Mary Sue Cyrowski (from left to right in mirror) check their own make-up.



Ms. Orman gives last-minute instructions before dress rehearsals start for 'Free to Be You and Me'.

Director has unique role in community theatrics

By LORAIN McCLISH

Cecilia Orman's dramatic classes in the Farmington Community Center wound up its winter session with two productions of "Free to Be You and Me," then went on to stage the play for Birmingham's Walnut Elementary School and Bloomfield's Hooper School.

The three children's plays that are put on each year there are a tradition in the center, which can boast sell-outs a week before the production date.

The dramatic students were on their own to devise "a red, white and green costume, kooky or straight, whatever you want," Ms. Orman said, "and they are all given the responsibility of some behind-the-stage work."

The play was a light-hearted contemporary production of a dozen skits downing sexist role-playing. One skit was called "William's Doll." One spoofed housework and television commercials. The words to one song read in part "A person should be what they want to be. A person's a person that way." One skit concerned a girl trying to join an all-male baseball team.

"WE TALKED ABOUT the subject matter very carefully," Ms. Orman said. "They were very willing, even eager to do it. They were all well aware of these things and very open and free about them. The little boy who played in 'William's Doll' (Miles Baum) is a very masculine little boy with no hangups about that sort of thing at all."

The 20 eight-to-twelve-year-old youngsters worked 10 weeks to stage the full hour production under Ms. Orman's method of trying to get them to act realistically rather than show off. I want them to get to know the difference between acting and reciting before grandma," she said.

In that 10-week interim, "The kids get very close. They get to depend on one another and start prompting one another with cues. They become irritated with one who doesn't know his lines and I can see a kind of team spirit developing."

She went on to say, "I don't put pressure on them. They put it on themselves because they know they have to depend upon one another to make themselves look good."

Along this same line, Ms. Orman talked about what she called a "touchy area," that of giving criticism. "Some days it must seem to them that all I'm doing is criticizing them and it's remarkable to me how they take it and use it and learn to accept it. They understand very quickly that it is for the good of the show and are willing to take it for that reason."

MS. ORMAN began performing at the age of eight, graduated from the University of Michigan, then worked in professional summer stock in the East. Both she and her husband, Stewart, are members of the Farmington Players, where she has done some directing, as well as back-stage and on-stage work.

Playgoers may remember that she took the title roles in both "Sabrina Fair" and "Anastasia" and the second lead in "Darny Yankies."

"When we moved from Farmington to Birmingham, we continued our membership with the Players because of the caliber of their productions," she said.

She has worked as a volunteer with dramatics classes in the inner city, taught fifth and sixth grades in public school, taught creative dramatics to three and four year olds, given story hours, taught nursery school, and just finished a Noel Coward production with adults, which was performed in the Birmingham Temple.

All of it geared me up to what I really like to do and that is what I'm doing right now," she said.

WHAT SHE IS doing right now is taking a short vacation before she winds up for her next class which will be a group of junior high school students coming in January for another session of classes leading up to a play production scheduled for Easter time.

Registration for all classes in the center is scheduled for Wednesday

and Thursday, Jan. 7 & 8. Ms. Orman's class is limited to 15 persons between the ages of 12-15.

She expects to see a lot of her former students back. She has been giving classes in the center since its inception, "so some of these children have worked together for three or

four seasons," she said, and many have become friends because of our common interest.

The Ormans have two children, Peter, 11, who was on stage in "Free to Be You and Me," and 14-year-old Julie, who served as her mother's assistant director for the winter show.



Kathy Klein, Sara Nemeth and Ron Sinuh on stage in a satire concerning Mrs. Claus' consternation at Christmas time.

Photos by
Gerry Gazda



The "South Paw" skit is performed by Miles Baum and Shelly Lichtman.