

Bizarre is the word for upcoming mask show

By ETHEL SIMONS

Carnival masks from Basel, Switzerland, and French mime masks will be worn by actors in an Ann Arbor production tentatively titled "the mask show."
Curtis Armstrong, co-manager of the group called Roadside Attractions, admits that working with masks is a bit bizarre. But it opens up all kinds of possibilities for comedy, with serious overtones.
Roadside Attractions is made up of several actors who graduated last spring from the Academy of Dramatic Art (ADA) at Oakland University in Rochester, plus a few other company members, all living in Ann Arbor.
Armstrong said he first worked with the carnival masks at ADA where instructor James Tompkins, who had been a student at the Jacques Lecoq School of Mime in Paris taught them the use of masks as the actual properties.

and, in Basel, bought eight carnival masks for the troupe to use.
Holding one of the white shapes, Armstrong explained, "They're normal. One comes of sort of anti-ethnic. All have intelligence. One danger of doing Basel masks is that if you think too much, they're not funny."
He described the show as "primarily comedy, but there's a pathetic quality."
THE BASEL masks are being used for the first time in a Michigan production, according to Armstrong. The actors will don hats ranging from a sporty derby and Sherlock Holmes deerstalker to grubby crew, to heighten characterization.

"We want to incorporate music in the production and climax with a dance number with the creatures," Armstrong said.
Performances are tentatively scheduled to open Feb. 19 in one of the theaters on the University of Michigan campus. Armstrong said he can be reached by phone at 985-8848 in Ann Arbor, for more specific information closer to showtime.
He explained that the Basel masks in the show are "in the raw state in the carnival, they are magnificently painted with feet of hair."
The mask show will be totally improvised.
"At the start, nine actors will have all

these masks totally at our disposal. We will just go with them."
TWO FRENCH masks male and female, also will be worn by the actors. Armstrong said these are "neutral masks, human faces devoid as much as possible of human expression. They have incredible power. The actors, through extended bodily movement, make the face change."
After Roadside Attractions was formed, the company moved to Ann Arbor last spring. It was Jeff Feffer, reeve, Feffer in the "Flea," and a commedia dell'arte production "Servant of Two Masters."
"The commedia dell'arte is a major Ital-

ian Renaissance mask form that is pure comedy," he said. Under the Basel and French masks the actors cannot speak, but the commedia masks come halfway down on the face allowing performers to speak.
"Perhaps the best known of the stock characters is Harlequin," Armstrong said. Roadside Attractions also did a Shakespearean production in Flint during a week's residency teaching workshops. They presented a variation of Shakespeare's best-known plays, "Shakespeare and the Supremacy."
ADDITIONALLY, they appeared at art fairs and Renaissance fairs doing improvised commedia dell'arte.

Other ADA graduates in the group are Lavina Moyer of Seattle, Wash., who is the corporation president, Jerry Bennett of Flint, and PERRY HENNE of Grand Rapids. Armstrong is from Berkeley and also lived in Pontiac.
Other members of the acting company include Jim Moran, Sheri Stern and Laurel Januszewski.
Armstrong said he will probably remain behind the scenes for the mask show, involved in the production end with co-manager Ms. Moyer. Herbert Ferrer is doing choreography and music.
After the mask show, Roadside Attractions hopes to do Harold Pinter's "The Caretaker."

THE INSTRUCTOR is still with ADA but is working with Roadside Attractions on the mask show.
By coincidence, Armstrong had lived in Switzerland and his parents now live there. Early in January he visited them.

Dining And Entertainment Guide THE TOWN

Center opens doors

The new Henry Ford Hospital West Bloomfield Center opened its doors for public tours during a weekend open house and 3,835 area residents took the opportunity to view the facility.
The center, 6777 W. Maple Road, serves southern Oakland County.
While attendance was less than that at an open house for an identical Ford facility in Dearborn several weeks ago, the local turnout Saturday and Sunday was still considered a success. A spokesperson for the center said, "On Super Bowl Sunday, we expected mostly women and children, but men actually showed up too."
In addition to individuals and area officials, a number of Boy and Girl Scout troops attended the open house, at which several life-saving demonstrations including cardio-pulmonary resuscitation and the Heimlich method of saving a choking victim, were given.

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