

Program to feature varied music



GRETCHEN WOODS

"Share an Evening with Gretchen Woods," a program of vocal music ranging from Bach to boogie, will be presented at 7 p.m. Sunday by the Open Format of Birmingham Unitarian Church.

The first half of the recital will feature Ms. Woods, a mezzo-soprano, singing works of Bach, Handel, de Falla and Samuel Barber. She will be accompanied on the piano by Julie Kutosh of Birmingham.

The second half will consist primarily of contemporary folk-pop music by John Denver, L. Bruce, R. Farina, Joni Mitchell, Leonard Cohen and Pete Seeger. James Long, who attends Penn State will add guitar accompaniment to several of these songs.

Lonely travelers wait at 'Bus Stop'

By BARBARA MICHALS

Loneliness and the desperation it brings are the somber themes of William Inge's "Bus Stop," current offering at the Will-O-Way Apprentice Theatre in Bloomfield Hills, weekends through May 22.

The drama, competently performed by the Will-O-Way group, is set in a bleak small-town diner in Kansas. Owner Grace Hayward is a cynical woman, harried by a runaway husband and the harsh realities of small-town life. Elmyr, the teen-age waitress, is naive and idealistic, yearning for broader horizons than her hometown offers.

Into their lives come the bus passengers who are stranded at the diner overnight by a blizzard. Dr. Lyman, a three-married former professor, has turned to drink and molesting young girls. Cherie, a "poor nightclub singer,

has been abducted by a rascous cowboy Bo Decker and his pal Virgil. Bo is determined to marry Cherie despite her loud objections. Will Masters, the local sheriff, and Carl, the bus driver, complete the characters.

Virgil tries to persuade Bo to use a more subtle, gallant approach with Cherie, but Bo is skeptical of anything but brute force. "Ya gotta take a chance, Bo," Virgil admonishes.

OUT OF LONELINESS, Grace is willing to take a chance and risk being hurt again when she opens her heart and her bed to Carl.

Flattered by the attentions of Dr. Lyman, Elmyr is willing to take a chance on meeting him in Topeka for a day on the town. Even when she learns of his unsavory reputation, Elmyr continues to romanticize the lonely old man as a tragic, misunderstood figure.

The isolated loneliness of his Montana ranch has made Bo desperate to return with a wife. Finally even Cherie is willing to take a chance and accept Bo after she realizes her notion of love may be an unobtainable ideal.

Only Virgil has learned to comfortably accept his loneliness as a permanent state. His closing line runs something to the effect that "some folks are meant to be left out in the cold."

All the Will-O-Way players are highly convincing in their roles. The production features John Wilusz as Bo, Eileen Weiss as Cherie, Dike Dweley as Dr. Lyman, and Sue Wold as Elmyr. Pat Ursin portrays Grace, Dick Williams is Virgil, Lee Barnwell is Will, and Dan Rugenski is Carl.

WILUSZ is appropriately boisterous and awkward, Dweley is pathetically world-weary, and Miss Wold is

delightfully ingenuous. Miss Weiss so completely captures Cherie's hard edges that the character's underlying vulnerability has a hard time showing through.

Perhaps, though, that notion stems from the ghost of Marilyn Monroe and her memorable film portrayal of Cherie. As time has shown, Miss Monroe's underlying vulnerability is imitable, and it is greatly to Miss Weiss' credit that she never attempts an imitation.

Williams and Miss Ursin seem totally at ease and likable in their roles, while Barnwell and Rugenski have straightforward parts that don't really give them a chance to excel.

Under the direction of Celia Merrill Turner, the pacing of the show is a bit slow, quite appropriate to the long hours the travelers spend stranded at the diner.

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