

# 'Table Manners' takes comic look at British

By ETHEL SIMMONS

## Review

How the British look at love and life is explored in "Table Manners," a deft comedy by Alan Ayckbourn continuing through Dec. 18 at Meadow Brook Theatre.

A fine cast of six players share the stage, with the story centering around Annie (Mary Gallagher), the plain, unmarried sister who cares for an ailing mother in the family's lovely, old country home.

All of the scenes take place in "Annie's dining room," where Annie is joined by her brother and his wife and her sister and husband, plus the local, unmarried veterinarian. The mother is never seen.

"Table manners," or "company manners," never last long when a family gets together, despite Sarah's (Barbara Sommers) efforts to keep everyone acting at their civilized best.

ANNE IS MOST comfortable in jeans and sweater, and Mary Gallagher gives this portrayal an easy, down-to-earth approach. She performs with a naturalness that is appealing, even when she jizzes up her appearance with a flowered dress and high heels.

"Tarted up" is how Sarah describes this look to husband Reg, but then you never can win with Sarah. Ms. Sommers makes a nice progression in her role, with Sarah first appearing strong and firm, gradually displaying edginess and fussbudgetry that can be exasperating to everyone, particularly Reg.

As Reg, Michael Cullen is hearty and blusters in what we have come to expect is typical English fashion. He seems a good-hearted bloke, is nice to Annie as well as Sarah, and doesn't appear to deserve his wife's nagging.

Annie is pining away for Tom, the vet, who is another English character we all know and love. He's a dense fellow always so cheerful he's hard to get mad at. Handsome Peter McRobbie does him well, in hacking jacket and jodgers.

Norman is one of those people everyone knows, who never behaves sensibly. He's an annoying cut-up, somehow

is tolerated and manages to get his own way with surprising regularity.

ERIC TAVARIS comes on strong as Norman, and you can see the wheels spin in Norman's head each time he manages another bit of mischief.

Norman is an assistant librarian, supported by his smart, bitchy wife Ruth (Marion Bratch), a business woman who knows him through and through.

Ms. Bratch gives the most keen-edged portrayal in the play, making us understand some of the reasons she

keeps Norman around.

At times, the characterizations seem a little out of synch. The men, Norman, Tom and Reg, all are broadly played. The women, Ruth, Annie and Sarah, are more realistic and incisive.

But together they make harmonious comedy. The plot's about an illicit weekend Anne has planned to spend with Norman. Not wanting to give the plot away, enough said.

Much of the discussion and comedy takes place at the family's meals, and there are lots of jokes about serving

soup and eating salad. These are bits that are amusing, if not devastatingly funny.

THIS IS A PLAY that is humorous most of the way through, except in the second act where it sags a bit with somewhat tedious table dialogue.

John Ulmer directed the Meadow Brook production with good pacing

and quality development of character. Larry A. Reed, who did the nostalgic small-town house exteriors for Meadow Brook's last show, "Pier," has done the interior for this once-Grand English manor home.

"Table Manners" was a hit on the London stage and Broadway. It is the first in a trilogy of Ayckbourn comedies. "The Norman Conquests."

## How to send news items

News releases, photographs or other information can be mailed to Ethel Simmons, entertainment editor, at 1225 Bowers, Birmingham 48012 or delivered to any office of the Observer & Eccentric.

The entertainment pages include news, features and reviews on movies, music (pop, rock, jazz, country), nightlife, restaurants, special attractions, theater, college, community and professional travel, TV and radio. The phone number of the Birmingham office is 644-1100.

## Observer & Eccentric newspapers . . . the best of both worlds



**RESTAURANT & DISCO**  
featuring  
**FAMILY STYLE DINNERS**  
Monday thru Saturday  
Open Daily 5 p.m.  
Sunday Open 2 p.m.

Dance to  
**DISCO MUSIC**  
Tuesday thru Saturday  
featuring  
**LIVE BAND - LATIN AMERICAN MUSIC**  
with  
**BILLY PRINCE**  
SUNDAY AND MONDAY EVENINGS  
We Cater to  
Parties & Banquets  
Make Your  
New Year's Reservations  
555 FOREST (Entrance on Main) Plymouth  
Phone 459-6370

## DINING AND ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

# ON THE TOWN

## Guess what we're having for dinner tonight?

Delicately delectable crepes. Sinfully creamy quiche. A cheeseburger of a different color. (Blue). Could this possibly be the Stouffer's you know? Oh sure, you can have your full course meal as usual. But now we also have more to offer on the lighter

side. So come make a Stouffer's discovery tonight. Now you can enjoy more of the things you like most. Because our new menu is exactly to your taste. And you don't have to splurge to enjoy it.



## 4th Annual Plymouth Christmas Arts & Crafts Show

Plymouth Cultural Center  
&  
Central Middle School Cafeteria  
Free Admission - 102 Exhibitors  
Friday, December 9, 11 a.m. - 9 p.m.  
Saturday, December 10, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Plymouth Cultural Center  
Sunday, Dec. 11  
11 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Plymouth Cultural Center

## Make a Christmas present of Christmas past.

Make the joy and beauty of yesterday's Yuletides one of your family's gifts this year Dec. 3 through Dec. 31.

Crafts at Christmas  
Watch craftsmen fashion authentic items along the Museum's Street of Shops, in the Village Crafts Center and elsewhere.

"Pinochio"  
On the Museum Theater stage, the Greenfield Village Players present an enchanting, fantastical opera for kids of all ages.

Decorated Homes  
Candles, holly, ornaments—all festoon many Village homes and shops just as they would have on bygone Christmases.

Old-Time  
Carriage, Sleigh and Train Rides  
Yours to enjoy, depending on weather.

Joyous Yuletide Music  
Candlers and choirs around Village and Museum capture the holiday spirit in song.

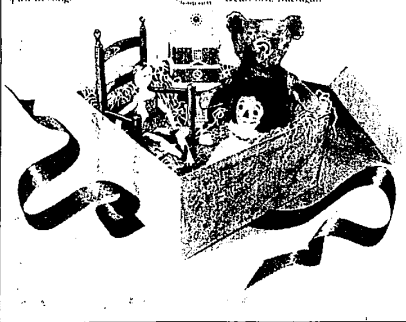
Free Hot Spiced Cider and Delicious Treats  
Served 10-4 in the Town Hall on the Village Green.

Unique Gifts for Christmas  
Hand-crafted pieces, souvenirs and Museum reproductions are available in the Museum and at Village shops during your tour.

Holiday Hours  
Village—9-5 daily  
Museum—9-5 weekdays, 9-6 weekends  
Special Evening Hours  
(Museum Only) till 8:30 p.m.  
Dec. 26-31  
Closed Christmas and New Year's Days.

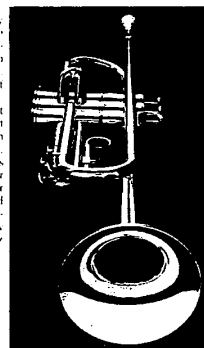
Want More Information?  
Call the Village Party Line  
(313) 271-1976  
Available 24 hours every day.

Greenfield Village &  
Henry Ford Museum  
Dearborn, Michigan



## BRUNCH & ALL THAT JAZZ.

Our Sunday brunch is more than an eye-opener. It's a trip to New Orleans. The fragrance of creole cookery. The Market Square colors of fresh fruit in season, bignets, and other pastries you've never seen this far North. The sound of a real home-treasured New Orleans jazz band.



Sunday at Eden Glen—sazana and jambalaya, crepes, eggs, Hissard and seafood gumbo with that unmistakable French Quarter flair. And the band plays on to kick off our jazzed up Sunday brunch. Now Orleans style. Stryking 10:30-2:30. Reservations accepted.

eden  
glen  
RESTAURANT  
BE TEMPTED

2085 West Big Beaver Road, Between Crooks and Coddage, 48060  
American Express and other major credit cards honored

## ALBAN'S

Bottle & Basket Restaurant  
188 N. Hunter, Birmingham  
646-6553

## Gourmet Deluxe Buffet Trays

Corn Beef  
Roast Beef  
Ham  
Pepperbeef  
Turkey  
Southern Fried  
Chicken



Swiss Cheese  
Potato Salad  
Cole Slaw  
and a variety of  
other salads  
garished with  
olives and pickles

Bread and mustard are included with trays.  
\$3.75 per person.  
Meat tray only same as above EXCLUDING salads.  
\$3.25 per person

## Alban's Regular Tray

Your choice of 3 meats: Corn Beef, Roast Beef, Ham, Turkey, Pepperbeef and All Beef Salami.  
Your choice of 2 salads: Potato Salad, Cole Slaw, Mixed Bean, Cavi Bean, Swiss Cheese.

Garished with olives and pickles—Bread and mustard also included  
"TOP QUALITY MEATS ONLY" \$2.95 per person

## Another Specialty Tray of Alban's

Sandwiches of your choice set on a tray—garished with pickles and olives and a jar of mustard and potato chips—\$2.70 per person

## Complete Hot Meal Service

HOT AND COLD HORS D'OEUVRES Also Available