## Tension mounts in tragedy 'The Runner Stumbles'

By ETHEL SIMMOMS

"The Runner Stumbles," in its Michigan premiere at Meadow Brook Theatre, weaves a progressively taut lale of the circumstances that lead to tragedy for a zealous priest and an idealitate man.

negatistic nun.
Act one lags at time with repetition,
but act two has more spark.
As the nun, Sister Rita, Cheryl Giannini conveys enthasisam in the first
act and glows with fervor in the sec-

## Review

ond act when the dramatic pace quick-

ens.
Jeffrey McLaughlin portrays Father
Rivard, a more difficult role that
requires the priest to suffer inner
agonies while showing a cold exterior.
The changes of characters the priest

must display are performed in a way that makes him appear somewhat

THE PRIEST and nun have different gods. He believes in a vengeful god. She warms to a god of love.
When she arrives to teach in the

small, isolated, northern Michigan town, her welcome is from a pleasant but indifferent priest.

In these first-meeting scenes, fcLaughlin seems falsely cheerful, In these first-meeting scenes, McLaughlin seems falsely cheerful, beaming exaggerated, naive smiles. Later, when the priest changes into a confused, wrathful man fighting the man-to-woman love he feels for the nam, the actor needs to show greater resistant furnment. emotional torment.

The sparse setting by Donald Beck-Ice Capades captures childhood dreams

A Wish" are as follows: 7:30 p.m. on all weeknights: noon, 4 and 8 p.m. Sat-urday: 1:30 and 5:30 p.m. Sunday.

man suits the story's mold. The drama by native Detroiter Milan Stitt has been presented on Broadway and by dozens of production companies around the world.

Charles Nolte directed the Meadow Brook production, which runs through Feb. 23 on the Oakland University campus in Rochester. Stirt's drama is based on a murder case, which took place near Traverse City in the early 1900s.

Marianne Muellerleile, as Mr5, Shandig, the priest's protective house-keeper, seems natural to the part. Charlotte Bova apily plays Erna Prindle, a plain spinster who goes out-side the Church—with the priest's blessing—to find a husband at the

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Methodist socials.
The small church on the hill, from where the lonely priest tries to do God's work, is contrasted with the calcusness of the town below. We can empathize with the priest's struggle against their unconcern, vividly described by him.

The only disadvantage to the flash-back technique is that occasionally when the action shifts, the characters are not clearly introduced.

Also in the cast are Peter McRobbie as Monsignor Nicholson; Patricia Reilly as young Louise, who gives tes-timony; William Le Massera as the defense lawyer; Michael Cullen as the prosecutor, and Mic Rothhaar as the guard.

## Children of every age may find their special dreams come true in this special dreams come true in this part of the children of the companies and the companies and the children of the companies and the children of the child Janet Runn, comedy duo Mike Course and Bob Young and the tumbling clown Peluza. Returning favorites include tenage juggler Albert Lucas, adagio skaters Mark and Alison, and betroit's own skating-acrobatic. bruther-sister team of the Fenton Kids. Tickets are on sale at the Olympia Stadium box office, all metro Detroit area J.L. Hudson's, Olympia Travel in Birmingham and the Windsor Arena. Telephone 895-7000 for further information. stars. It's a rollicking and merry return to childhood in "The Flintstone Frolics." Headlining the show are Melissa Militano and Johnny Johns, Richard Ewell, and newcomers Donald Knight. Kids. AND ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE PERFORMANCE TIMES for "Make





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