

Trip goes to matinee



Michael Allinson and Valerie French co-star as Mr. and Mrs. Charles Condomine.

"Blithe Spirit," the Noel Coward classic, is the destination for theater lovers who wish to join The Community House in Birmingham for a trip to see the comedy on Wednesday, Feb. 14.

Preceding the matinee performance, the group will have a specially planned luncheon at Meadow Brook Hall. Round-trip transportation from The Community House is also included in the theater package, with reservations being accepted at The Community House, Bates and Townsend.

"Blithe Spirit" is the comedy Noel Coward wrote to cheer up his fellow Englishmen during the grim days when England stood alone in World War II. Its opening in London in 1941 led to a five-year-long success, followed by a run in New York City.

It has continued ever since to be one of the most popular comedies of the English language.

COWARD WROTE in "Blithe Spirit" a unique version of the eternal triangle, with characters Mr. and Mrs. Charles Condomine and the ghost of the husband's first wife, Elvira, comprising the triangle's principal angles.

Noel Coward ultimately wrote two of his outstanding entertainments, "Private Lives" and "Tonight at 8:30," as vehicles for their appearances together at the height of their careers some 20 years later.

The Community House includes this theater luncheon afternoon as part of its outreach programming. The public may participate in all Community House programs. For further information, call 644-5832.

Theater

M' Brook costumer describes job

For any mother who has stitched up kimonos for the sixth grade production of "The Mikado" or transformed an 8-year-old into a jolly green giant for Halloween, producing 200 costumes for Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream" might seem like a tall order.

For Mary Lynn Bonnell, head costume designer of the Meadow Brook Theatre, it is all in a month's work.

Mrs. Bonnell will bring a host of stories about her experiences at Meadow Brook when she initiates a new series of "Coffee Hours at Drake House" on Wednesday. She also will bring samples of her handwork. Among the ornate Shakespearean costumes will be one worn by Caliban in "The Tempest" which

gives the appearance of a sea monster. "Gimmick" type costumes will include some from last season's production of "Coe" which were designed for split-second changing.

Sponsored by West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation, Mrs. Bonnell's talk will begin at 1 p.m. The fee is \$2. Pre-registration is requested by calling 661-2240. Drake House is at 6485 W. Maple (two miles west of Orchard Lake Road), with parking off the Drake Road entrance.

SECOND IN THE series of three coffee hour programs is scheduled for Wednesday, March 21, with Harry Satchwell and Mary Conway, authors of "Meet, Eat and Enjoy Greater Detroit."

"When I speak to groups, I find few people who realize that literally every costume worn by the casts at Meadow Brook is designed and made right here, stitch by stitch, bead by bead," explained Mrs. Bonnell. "We even make wigs, or adopt them to suit our needs. About the only thing we don't make is shoes, and I wish we could make them too. Finding shoes to suit a period costume is about our biggest problem."

The flurry of activity in the Meadow Brook costume department begins about three weeks before the opening night of a new play. "It seems like a tight schedule to design and make so many costumes in so short a period of time," said Mrs. Bonnell. "But it's really a waste

of time for me to start doing sketches and thinking about colors, let alone making a quick trip to New York for fabric, before I can sit down with the set and lighting designers and the lead players."

Mrs. Bonnell considers "Blithe Spirit," which opened Thursday, to be one of the most difficult plays she has had to costume for during her six years at Meadow Brook. There are only seven characters in the play, but there are many scene changes and time lapses.

"You wouldn't expect to see a character in the same costume three days later—so that means many costume changes, she explained.

THE MOTHER of three daughters, Wendy (11), Pam (14) and Leslie (15), Mrs. Bonnell consid-

ers her entry into a career of costume designing as something of a "happy accident." She had sewed for the girls and done some costumes for auto shows, and had always loved the theater. She applied for a job as a seamstress and costumer at Meadow Brook six years ago and the following year was asked to be head of costuming and costume design.

"The beauty of this job is that every show is different," she said. "I rarely do two costumes that are the same. My hours are flexible enough so I can be with the girls when they need me. They don't mind all the hours I work and they enjoy being around the theater too. In fact, Pam and Wendy had parts in 'The Devil's Disciple' here last fall."

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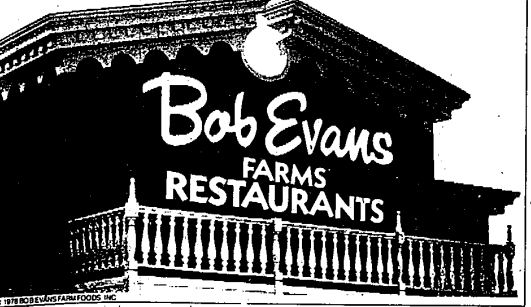
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