

Thursday, September 27, 1979

(F1D)

Teenager plays first professional role

By JIM WINDELL

Fifteen-year-old Martha Sanders plays the role of 13-year-old Shirley Talley in Lanford Wilson's "5th of July," drama continuing through Oct. 13 at the Attie Theatre in Detroit's Greektown.

Martha Sanders is Shirley Talley. Then, again, she really isn't. "It's not typecasting," the pert and bright actress said, sitting cross-legged in a chair in the family room of the Bloomfield Township home, "but she is like me in some ways."

In her first professional production, Ms. Sanders was not sure if she liked the play, at first. "I've learned, though that you don't really know a play until you see it come to life."

SINCE IT CAME to life after the hard work of four weeks rehearsal, she has found her character fun to play.

"Shirley is precocious and nosy. She dreams a lot and is determined to be a star. She says she is going to be an artist, but she never does anything about it."

That's what makes Ms. Sanders different from the character she portrays. When Ms. Sanders wanted to learn more about the theater, she signed up for Cranbrook Summer Theatre School and rode her bike to classes.

A girlfriend told her about the audition for the part of a teenage girl at the Attie Theatre. Ms. Sanders didn't just dream about playing the part. She auditioned for it and got it. She rode a bus every day to rehearsals in Detroit.

Carolyn Sanders, her mother, said she wasn't sure at first that she wanted Martha to have the part.

"I had never seen a play like this before," Mrs. Sanders said. "It is very adult. But we all talked it over and decided that we can't shelter Martha. There is nothing in the play that she



Martha Sanders of Bloomfield Township is playing her first professional role in "5th of July" at the Attie Theatre. (Photo by Michael Stern)

isn't going to come across sometime in life."

Ms. Sanders, who looks younger than her 15 years, is the baby of the family. Other family members are a brother, 18, who is attending Michigan State University this fall, and two older sisters, 20 and 22, already on the East

Lansing campus. Their father, Charlie Sanders, is a regional superintendent for the Detroit Public Schools.

EVEN THOUGH Ms. Sanders was not taken to a great number of plays as a child, "Dad would take us down to the Fisher once in a while to see plays

like 'The Wiz'," she drifted toward acting in a natural way.

"When we were in elementary school, my girlfriends and I liked to make up plays and write scripts. We also made our own puppets, and for awhile I was thinking about going into puppetry," she said.

'I had to figure out what Shirley was like for her whole life. . . . Getting down to the nitty-gritty of her character was a big help in playing her.'

—Young actress Martha Sanders

Three years ago during the Bicentennial celebration, Ms. Sanders and her friends wrote a script depicting important events in America's first 200 years. After making costumes and scenery, they performed the pageant in the neighborhood.

Mrs. Sanders still proudly shows pictures of her daughter in this pageant, from the family photo album.

In three years at Derby Junior High School, Ms. Sanders appeared in four school plays. She credits her seventh-grade English teacher, Mrs. Kirchofer, also a drama coach, with being a big influence in her theatrical interest.

The young actress is a 10th grade student at Seaholm High School and looks forward to appearing in school plays.

HER PRESENT hectic schedule, which started when rehearsals began in August, has put a crimp in her life.

"I had wanted to run for co-chairman of the Seaholm Field Day, but Mom said no way," Ms. Sanders said.

Her mother said Martha has a way of getting totally involved in activities and "sometimes bites off more than she can comfortably chew."

The part of Shirley in "5th of July" has demanded a heavy commitment.

"After I got the part, Sam — Sam Pollack, he's the director — called me and stressed all the work that would be

involved. From Aug. 7 to opening night on Sept. 7, we had rehearsals practically every day, 6-8 hours a day," Ms. Sanders said.

For the first week of rehearsals, she and other cast members spent their time examining their character's personality.

"I had to figure out what Shirley was like for her whole life. She is an illegitimate child, and I had to figure out who she stayed with and how she got her values."

"Getting down to the nitty-gritty of her character was a big help in playing her."

DESPITE A SCHEDULE that includes performances Thursday, Friday and Sunday, with two shows Saturday, Ms. Sanders is enjoying her first taste of professional theater experience.

"I would like to keep working at the Attie in some way, even if it is working with lights or stage managing," she said. "There are lots of people at the theater I like and would like to continue to work with."

She has the same interests as other teenage girls. She often wonders why she looks the same age to herself every year in her school picture and why she doesn't have a boyfriend.

There will be a spring musical next year at Seaholm.

"I hope I can get a part in that musical," she said.

Weekend

IN THE SUBURBS

● **PINE KNOB MUSIC THEATRE** — in Clarkston presents Bette Midler at 7:30 p.m. Thursday-Friday, Sept. 27-28. Tickets at Birmingham Theatre, Pine Knob, Harmony House at Tel-Twelve Mall in Southfield and Fisher Theatre in Detroit. For further information call 647-7790.

● **THE RAVEN GALLERY** — coffee house presents Lori Jacobs of Detroit Wednesday, Sept. 26, through Sunday, Sept. 30, in Southfield. Showtimes Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday at 9:30 p.m.; Friday and Saturday at 9:30 and 11 p.m. Further information at 557-2622.

● **A Gilbert and Sullivan Reprise** — with Leon Berman, psychoanalyst and internationally renowned Gilbert and Sullivan expert, at 8 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 29, at the Galleria, St. Mary's College, Orchard Lake. Berman will discuss "A Psychoanalytic Consideration of W.S. Gilbert, with Copious Musical Examples" as performed by stars of the Michigan Lyric Opera's recent production of "H.M.S. Pinafore." For further information call 543-5912. All proceeds benefit Michigan Lyric Opera.

● **Cripple Creek Sandwich Theatre** — presents Joe Vermillion at 8 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 30, at Common Ground in Birmingham.

● **Nightcap with Mozart** — weekly midnight chamber music concert in informal setting presented by Renaissance Concerts, Inc., at 11:30 p.m. to 12:15 a.m. (refreshments at 11 p.m.) every Friday at Birmingham Unitarian Church in Bloomfield Hills. Duo guitars, Chris Bing and Peter Tollas. Information at 651-9934.

IN DETROIT

Caucus Club — presents Bess Bonnier on piano and Joe Lo Duca on guitar, alternating nights Tuesday-Saturday, through Oct. 13. Call 955-0970 between 10 a.m. and 9 p.m. Monday-Saturday for more information.

The Silent Clowns — film series presents "The Gold Rush" (1925) with Charles Chaplin, "Our Hospitality" (1923) with Buster Keaton and "The Paleface" (1921) with Buster Keaton, a short, at 7 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 30, in the Detroit Institute of Arts Auditorium. Children younger than 5 years of age not admitted to the theater. All films in the series are silent. For ticket information call 832-2730.

Fisher Theatre — presents "Death-trap," Ira Levin's comedy/thriller starring Brian Bedford, through Saturday, Oct. 6. Cast includes Kathleen Freeman, Betsy Miller, Kevin Conroy and George Edge. First play on the Fisher's 1979-80 subscription series. Tickets on sale at the box office, 872-1600.

Met Ball and Colours — appearing through Saturday, Sept. 29, at the Detroit Plaza's Celebration Lounge in the Renaissance Center. Located on the Promenade Level of the hotel, Celebration has no cover and no minimum. Hours 8 p.m. to 2 a.m. For additional information call 568-8000.

The Cartunes band is making good in hometown



Story: GARY D. LICHTMAN
Photos: LINDDA SOLOMON

To become a successful rock band it takes months of hard work as well as paying dues to the business.

One such group playing the bar circuit at this time is The Cartunes. As band member Matt Lee explains, "We've been through a lot of things together and it's something we all want real bad. We know what we are up against but we are going for our three main elements — acceptance, work and money, in that order."

The Cartunes are one of the few rock bands to play jazz, such as Union Street and the Delta Lady. Their extensive performances range from the Wagon in Troy, Michigan State University's Lizard's Underground and Birmingham's Art-in-the-Park.

The Delta Lady is featuring the hometown boys Thursday-Saturday, Sept. 27-29. The lounge is located in Ferndale just south of Nine Mile Rd., east of Woodward.

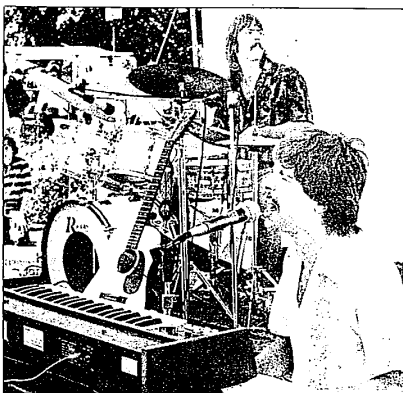
THE CARTUNES started out as four Southfield High musicians who knew what they wanted to do when they left high school in 1975 and 1976.

Said Matt Lee, "It was myself on lead guitar, Ron Lamm on bass, Tim Seger on keyboard and Pat LaRou on drums. We all sing but we were looking for a lead singer."

Seger remembers that long, hard period, "Listening to 50 different singers. It was like 'Singers on parade.' Some of them were just not our style while some were so bad we felt sorry that they came all this way."

After much search throughout newspapers, musical referral services and friends, they found Jerome Newell from Melvindale High.

The Cartunes are among the youngest musicians playing the bar circuit at the present time, which says quite a bit



Seger and LaRou make lively music during the band's recent stint at Birmingham's Art-in-the-Park festival.

for the band's musicianship. "We play everything from rock to pop to blues. We're even working on a couple New Wave and MOR (Middle of the road) tunes," Lee explained.

Their high school, Southfield, had much to do with their energy and push for music. Drummer LaRou said, "Paul Lips (the band director) helped me a lot in school. He established what I wanted to do."

LEE ADDED, "Yeah, Pat, Tim and I all took theory classes with him. Mr. Lips was really great. When he saw people playing by ear, he complimented them, not like many educators and teachers who discourage it completely."

The group feels that its show is song oriented; they all felt that song lyrics are very important to them. Their live act includes several original tunes, supplemented by cover material of other performers.

"We've all had different tastes in music," Newell remarked. "I started singing country tunes while the other guys listened to mostly Allman Brothers, Bob Dylan and Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young."

As for the future, Seger came up with an idea. "We would like to go back to Southfield High and play an outdoor concert on the football field."

Matt Lee (from left) on lead guitar, Pat LaRou on drums, Ron Lamm on bass, Jerome Newell on vocals and Tim Seger on keyboards comprise the Cartunes. Four of the five bandmen graduated from Southfield High School.