

# Pleasures abound in 'Chapter Two'

By DONALD V. CALAMIA

The Southfield Civic Theatre continues its trend of producing thoroughly enjoyable shows with its current hit, Neil Simon's "Chapter Two."

Performances continue this weekend at the Southfield Parks and Recreation Building, 25000 Evergreen. The curtain rises at 8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday and at 2 p.m. Sunday.

Autobiographical in nature, Neil Simon's show follows the lives of a recently widowed writer and a newly divorced actress. Through the help of a well-meaning brother and a match-making best friend, the two lonely people meet. A whirlwind courtship ensues, followed by marriage.

The matchmakers, who themselves have gotten involved in a romantic interlude, are amazed and concerned by the sudden turn of events.

The first days of the marriage are rocky by doubts and arguments. The differences, however, are soon settled. The newlyweds begin a new life free from the fears and anxieties of their previous marriages.

SIMON'S writing in both the comic and the dramatic scenes is light, fast-paced and full of insight into the

## review

human experience. Each of his characters is well defined, unique, yet ordinary. Simon's forte is writing about real people. His "Chapter Two" is probably as close to real life as he has come.

Director Barbara Oleszczuk has taken Simon's script and fleshed it out with four highly talented young performers. Each breathes vigorous life into his or her own character. It is obvious that Ms. Oleszczuk has had her performers do their homework on the wide range of emotions they must present. Each handles them with ease.

Though the actual age of the performers vs. the age of the characters they portray is initially hard to accept (George Schneider in the show was just married for 12 years, yet the actor playing him can not be a day older than 25), the skills drawn forth by the performers to cover this problem are nothing short of marvelous.

Heading the cast as George Schneider is Michael Dietz. A rather pensive yet expressive young performer, Dietz

is full of energy when needed, and calm and thoughtful as required. He easily handles both the comic and serious sides of his character, both of which are often utilized.

Dietz also has mastered the technique of "talking to someone on the telephone," a bit used often throughout the show. Some of Dietz's best timed and most hilarious moments come when he is on the telephone.

As George's brother Leo, Thomas Zambeck is the antithesis of his brother. Where George is introverted and serious, Leo is jovial and on the make. All is not well in Leo's life, but he decides that George's well-being comes first.

IN THAT, Zambeck succeeds in developing a character who is deeply concerned about the brother he loves. As flashy and daring as Zambeck's portrayal is, he never once loses the care and concern that is always present between the brothers.

Jane Shaffmaster's return to the Civic Theatre's stage is a welcome one. Where her usual roles have been light in nature, Ms. Shaffmaster's portrayal of Jenna Mabow, George's new love interest, proves her versatility. Jennie's several monologues offer

Ms. Shaffmaster the opportunity to display a wide variety of emotions, all of which are well done. Initially, her portrayal is almost too much larger than life. Shortly into the show, however, Ms. Shaffmaster's obvious skills and talents take over and the performance she gives is excellent.

Sheer delight on stage is Bev Lloyd. Her portrayal of Faye Medwick, Jennie's best friend, is consistently strong and always delightful.

While the other performers were struggling on stage in the opening scenes, it was Ms. Lloyd's easy-going attitude and professionalism that set the tone for the rest of the show. She appeared at ease from the moment she first walked on stage. The other performers soon followed her lead.

DIRECTOR OLESZCZUK's cast is an ensemble. Each works well alone, yet together they work even harder. The little nuances that are present throughout the show give added dimensions to the characters that are not in the script.

Information regarding "Chapter Two" can be obtained by calling 354-4717.

## Theater groups vie in festival

Twelve amateur community theater groups from around the state will compete in the biennial One-Act Play Festival and Competition sponsored by the Community Theatre Association of Michigan and hosted by member group Grosse Pointe Theatre.

The festival will be held Friday-Sunday at the Grosse Pointe War Memorial on Lakeshore Drive. Groups in attendance will represent Livonia, Redford, Farmington, West Bloomfield, Royal Oak, Richmond, Flint, Saginaw, Mt. Pleasant, Escanaba, Iron Mountain, Battle Creek and Jackson.

Each group is permitted 60 minutes of performance time, 10 minutes to set the stage for its presentation and an additional 10 minutes to clear the stage.

for the next performance. Following each group's performance, three judges will publicly judge the performance.

THE PERFORMANCES are grouped into four sessions with three one-act plays being presented in each session. The sessions are scheduled for the evening of March 5, the afternoon and evening of March 6 and the final session beginning the morning of March 7. The winner should be announced about 3 p.m. March 8.

The winner of this competition will represent Michigan in the regional competition in Coshocton, Ohio, and the winner of the regional competition will perform in the national competition being held in Kalamazoo this year.

The group judged to be the best in the nation will represent the United States in an international festival of community theater being held in Monaco this summer.

The material being presented this year covers a broad spectrum of theater. The groups competing and the shows to be presented are as follows: Theatre Guild of Livonia-Redford — "Tribute."

Farmington Players — "The Runner Stumbles."

Southeast Theatre Center (Royal Oak) — "Jacques Brel."

Pit & Balcony (Saginaw) — "Autograph Hound."

Community Players of Mt. Pleasant — "The Killing of Sister George."

Jackson Civic Theatre — "Box and Cox."

Battle Creek Civic Theatre — "Starting Here, Starting Now."

Players de Noc (Escanaba) — "Same Time Next Year."

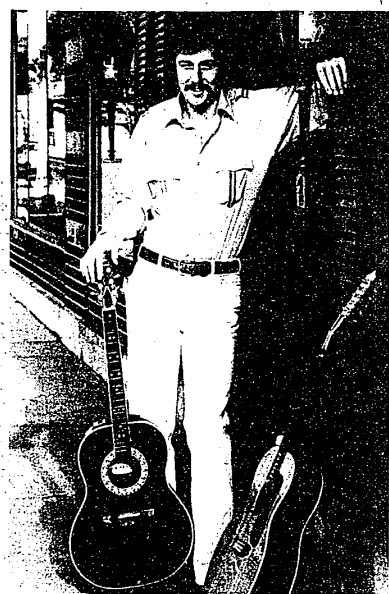
Dickinson County Community Theatre (Iron Mountain-Kingsford) — "Ile."

Family Players of West Bloomfield — "Two by Two."

Flint Community Players — "The Lover."

Richmond Community Theatre — "The Trysting Place."

All sessions are open to the public. A festival pass for the entire weekend is \$10 and available at the Grosse Pointe War Memorial office at 881-7511. Student rates and tickets for individual sessions are available at the door.



### At Crow's Nest

Wayne Willingham is appearing through March 28 at the Crow's Nest Lounge in the Mayflower Hotel in Plymouth. Hours of entertainment are 7:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. Tuesday-Thursday and 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. Friday-Saturday.

## table talk

THREE CARRYOUT lunches are available from the new gourmet shop of wine and food, The Merchant of Vino Cellars at 29525 Northwestern Highway in Southfield.

Two sandwiches are served on croissants, the popular French way. One has Bavarian ham, Swiss cheese and hot honey mustard, on a tray with apples and grapes. Another has breast of turkey, with the day's dressing, which varies between dillweed, hazelnut, pistachio and another yet-to-come.

A third sandwich is described as a "farmer's lunch" by Edward Jonna

who, with his wife Juliette, owns and operates the Cellars and also the Merchant of Vino in Troy. Four cheeses, crackers, red and white apples, and grapes are served on a tray.

Two chocolate mints are included with each sandwich. Available from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Monday-Friday, the carryout lunches are priced at \$3 for the sandwiches on croissants, \$2.50 for the "farmer's lunch."

The Cellars opened last week. Jonna handles the wines, while Mrs. Jonna is responsible for the food.

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