

Thursday, April 14, 1983 O&E

# Nancy Dussault fills stage with pizzazz

The Birmingham Theatre production of the musical "I'm Getting My Act Together and Taking It on the Road" with book and lyrics by Gretchen Cryer, music by Nancy Ford, continues through June 5 at the theater, 211 S. Woodward, Birmingham. For ticket information, call the box office at 644-3333.

By Helen Zucker  
special writer

Nancy Dussault moves like quicksilver, sings like an angel, is appealing to look at, has voice ranges that can be heard in the last row, has energy to spare plus a marvelous clarity of diction that is a delight to hear.

This petite lady is capable of holding the stage on her own. Dussault is loaded with talent, and it's always a pleasure to watch a real performer who is clearly enjoying herself. I have nothing but praise for this gifted woman.

The entire, well-rehearsed cast of Gretchen Cryer's "I'm Getting My Act Together and Taking It on the Road" appears to be riding on a "Natural High" — the opening song. There's a real, understated opening between audience chatter and the band practicing on stage that moves to the band

## review

**Dussault is loaded with talent and it's always a pleasure to watch a real performer who is clearly enjoying herself.**

chattering on stage; Dussault as Heather Jones, the singer turning 49, calling directions to her light man, and Heather, Alice, Cheryl and the Liberated Man's Band swinging into "Natural High."

I liked the first rendition of the number, but Heather's manager, Joe, insists the song be a real "upper." So we get a more frenetic version. Joe is well-played by Howard Platt, a great bear of a fellow in ancient corduroy, who seems to be doing a Mett and Jeff routine throughout the show. Dussault disappears into his lap when ever she parks her tiny body near his.

HE WANTS SWEETNESS and light and says the audience won't buy "age 40 or all this personal honesty business." The audience not only bought it, they seemed to eat it up. I saw smiles and nods all around me.

Joe wants Heather to sing her oldies, and she does "In a Simple Way I Love You," a pleasant song immediately under cut by the funny and touching "Miss America," and "Strong Woman Number." The latter causes Joe to run out of the theater. But he returns to continue the running argument.

The patter and the songs aren't so much a feminist diatribe as a wistful questioning: Why is it so hard for the sexes to get along? One of the world's oldest, most intriguing questions. Why won't men love women who can fix facemasks and build bookcases? Why can't women really talk to men who want them to smile all the time?

Heather's song "Lonely Lady" ties the script together. It's got all the poignant that underlies this original, timely script.

BONNIE STRICKMAN AS Alice and Betty Aberlin as Cheryl add much in the songs they share with Dussault. They come across as real, baffled, lov-

able, honest, talented women. The minimal props (a palmer's cap, a carpenter's jacket, coffee cups, a birthday cake) are all swiftly managed. They work beautifully.

This is one production where the lack of a curtain, offstage voices, wedding veils, high-school graduation caps, minister's robes appearing out of nowhere — old "experimental" techniques — really works out of the heart of the material.

Mark Buchan is amusing as Jake, the young musician who likes Heather; Alan Axelrod is a mean piano man; Gerald A. Mule is a fine guitarist; Mary Axelrod is a heck of a drummer, and Dewey Delany fills in on bass admirably.

The first-rate musicians give Dussault the kind of back-up she deserves. The transitions between dialogue and song are smooth, exquisitely timed.

Heather does return to her first rendition, the reprise, "Natural High," after Joe leaves her on her own. But it isn't a downer.

Quite the reverse. Dussault's beautiful posture, her head uplifted — a bright spot in the dark house — leaves you flying.

Congratulations to the Birmingham Theatre for bringing this show to town.



Nancy Dussault (center), Bonnie Strickman (left) and Betty Aberlin share a song in "I'm Getting My Act Together and Taking It on the Road," at the Birmingham Theatre.

# St. Dunstan's Guild grasps strength of 'Equus'

The St. Dunstan's Guild of Cranbrook production of "Equus" by Peter Shaffer continues at 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday at St. Dunstan's Playhouse on Love Pine Road in Bloomfield Hills. For ticket information call 644-0527.

By Barbara Michaels  
special writer

"Equus" is a stunning theatrical piece, and the current production by St. Dunstan's Guild of Cranbrook carries the precise delivery and emotional intensity necessary to this challenging drama.

Set in a provincial English psychiatric hospital, Peter Shaffer's play seeks answers to why a 17-year-old stable worker deliberately blinded six horses.

## review

As the psychiatrist probes the boy's psyche, he also comes to re-examine his own life and values.

Edith Leppard is outstanding as psychiatrist Martin Dysart, a bleakly disappointed man facing a mid-life crisis. Leppard's skillful enunciation and forceful delivery make his character riveting.

As the troubled youth Alan Stang, Thomas Peterson seethes with anger and suppressed passionate emotion, portraying the boy's mental anguish with real depth.

ALAN'S PROBLEMS stem in part from his home environment. Mother (Bonnie Cook) imbued him with great religious zeal, while his atheist father (Fred Armstrong) is full of vicious self-loathing and a strong Victorian streak.

Always intrigued by horses, the boy comes to realize their power and eternal suffering (via the bit and bridle) with the suffering of Christ. Eventually Alan attains a mythical fusion of horse and rider, a sexual and religious ecstasy that obscures him.

Dysart questions the morality of his having to "normalize" the boy, for he envisions the passion Alan is capable of feeling. "He has galloped," the psychiatrist laments, thinking ruefully of his

own drab life and disappointing marriage.

Fascinated with ancient Greece, Dysart relieves the tedium of his life only slightly with a vacation in Greece each year. While the psychiatrist can only yearn for a dead civilization, he admires Alan's viable relationship with his horse-god.

Cook and Armstrong are convincing as Alan's hurt and bewildered parents. Pert Lisa Jerrell is likable as Alan's fellow stable-worker and would-be seducer.

IN SMALL supporting roles, Lee Stoves as a compassionate lawyer, Mary Karsaban as the nurse, Patrick Cavanaugh as the stable owner, and Donald Schore as the horse-god are all fine.

Corrine Barringer's modernistic, stylized horses' heads function very well visually, and all six actors portraying the horses move convincingly. Director Edgar A. Guest III delivers a very smooth, professional production

of this very challenging show. "Equus" demands a lot from its audience, and anything less than excellence could quickly leave the viewer adrift. St. Dunstan's production meets the test and holds the audience rapt.

## Evening mixes poetry, music

A classical program of poetry and music, "Facade," will be given at 7:30 p.m. Sunday at Birmingham Temple, 2611 W. 12 Mile, Farmington Hills. A chamber ensemble, conducted by David Daniels, will play music by Sir William Walton as well as other works for brass, winds, percussion and choir. Poetry by Dame Edith Sitwell will

be recited by Brenda Ellison and Charles Greenwell. Tickets for this evening of poetry and music are \$7 for non-members, \$6 for Birmingham Temple members and \$5 for students and older persons. The program is co-sponsored by WQRS-FM. For information, call Joan Rose, 545-5912 or Ann Kutnick, 355-3319.

**KOOGY'S**

Saturating our exclusive petite portions at petite prices

FOR THE LIGHTER APPETITE, FOR LUNCH, FOR ANYTIME OUR PETITES ARE PERFECT!

example:

- Prime rib of beef, 14.95; petite 7.95
- Hickory smoked spare ribs, 8.95; petite 5.95
- Frog legs, 12.95; petite 7.95
- Fresh lake perch, 11.95; petite 6.95
- Fresh white fish, 10.25; petite 5.95
- Butterfly shrimp, 12.95; petite 7.95
- Koogy's special salad, 6.95; petite 4.25

755 W. Big Beaver Troy 382-1262  
In the Bottom of the Top of Troy Building

**SUNDAY BRUNCH**

Highlight your Sunday at Brunch in the newly renovated Pool Terrace Restaurant

Chef Hank Van Daal has assembled what may be the finest NEW brunch in Metro Detroit. Bring the family and friends. Every Sunday from 8:00 AM to 2:30 PM.

Seniors & Childrens \$5.50 plus tax  
Adults \$6.95 plus tax

**POOL TERRACE**  
at the **Troy Hilton Inn**

1455 Stephenson Hwy., Troy, MI 48064 (313) 583-9000

**FREE ADMISSION**

THIS AD WILL ENTITLE THE BEHOLDER TO ONE FREE ADMISSION TO THE MOVIES

**KEEGO CINEMA**

Orchard LA Rd at Case LA Rd. 1 1/4 Miles West of Telegraph  
Call 662-1800

**SOPHIE'S CHOICE (r)**

Weekends & Holiday 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00, 11:00

**BENJIE'S RESTAURANT**

- Petite Frog Legs
- Fresh Bowtie Salad
- Fresh Lake Perch
- Fresh Lamb Chops
- Fresh Lake Trout

ALL U Can Eat Specials

1000 N. Dixie Ave. Troy, MI 48063  
382-1773

**a Very Special Place in Time**

SINCE 1858

**DINE AT THE HISTORIC FENTON HOTEL**

Exquisite Dining  
PRIME RIB 14 OZ. \$12.95  
FROG LEGS \$7.95

**ZILKA'S FENTON HOTEL**

7 Miles West of 1-75 off Orange Hall Rd. Exit Downtown Fenton  
302 Leroy Street (313) 629-2532  
15 Minutes from Birmingham

**MERRICK'S**

Announcing Our New **SUNDAY BRUNCH** starting March 27 11 A.M. — 3 P.M.

Includes a scrumptious selection of appetizers, Merrick's famous New England Clam Chowder, Seafood Crepes, Sautéed Chicken Livers, Carved Roast Beef or Ham, Eclairs, Cream Puffs, Tarts...and much, much more

7" Adults ..... 14" Children under 12

Ample Parking At:  
**AMERICAN CENTER SOUTHFIELD**  
353-8144

**MERRICK'S**

**THE NEW JZZ** invites you to **HOLLYWOOD**

for the **PLAYBOY JAZZ FESTIVAL**

California's Hottest Annual Jazz Celebration

Count Basie, Hubert Laws, Buddy Rich, Spyro Gyra, Crusaders, and More!

Master of Ceremonies: Bill Cosby

Register at **HARMONY HOUSE**

Round Trip Fare on **NOBODY SERVES OUR REPUBLIC LIKE REPUBLIC**

Lodging at **Bonaventure Hotel** AND \$500 CASH

Details Daily on **WJZZ JAZZ 106**

**WJZZ JAZZ RADIO 106**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Age \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_  
What is your favorite station? \_\_\_\_\_  
What are your favorite artists? \_\_\_\_\_

**GENERAL CINEMA THEATRES**

BARBARETTA MATINEE 2:00 BEFORE 6 PM

**SOMERSET INN**

IT'S TIME TO FEEL GOOD AGAIN.

**PIAF**

**MAX DUGAN RETURNS**

1:15-3:30-5:30  
7:30-9:40

**JOY STICKS**

1:30-3:30-5:30-7:30-9:30