

Birmingham Players present 'Crucible'

"The Crucible" by Arthur Miller will be presented by the Birmingham Village Players at 8:30 p.m. Friday-Saturday, 7:30 p.m. Sunday and 8:30 p.m. May 6-7 at the playhouse on the corner of Hunter and Chestnut Streets, south of Maple Road.

Tickets at \$4 are available at the door, but reservations are recommended. For reservations, call 644-2075 anytime.

The play is about the witch trials in 1692. The trials were classic examples of mass hysteria, resulting in the hanging of a great many respectable men and women on charges of trafficking with the devil.

The action focuses on John and Elizabeth Proctor, played by Tim Wiltlinger and Joann Sellers, a farming couple, who are victims of a former serving girl of theirs, Abigail Williams, played by Sarah Heisterick.

Others in the cast are Diko Dwelley as Deputy Governor Danforth, Joyce Clouthier as Mary Warren, Boris Sellers as the Rev. Samuel Parris, John Unruh as the Rev. John Hale and Larry Sweet as Judge Hawthorne.

The show is produced by Helen Parrish and directed by Barbara Underwood. Set design is by Tom Kolodziej.



GARY CASKEY/staff photographer

Joann Sellers and Diko Dwelley appear in the Birmingham Village Players production of "The Crucible," Arthur Miller's drama about the Salem witch trials.

Oakland County group sponsors theater benefit

The Birmingham Village Players production of Arthur Miller's "The Crucible" will be presented at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, May 5, as a benefit for the Friends of Oakland County Welfare Rights Organization.

Tickets at \$8 may be purchased by calling 848-5094, 847-5113 or 474-5290. A check made out to "Friends of WRO" and mailed to 2706 Eastways, Bloomfield Hills 48013, will reserve tickets until they can be picked up the evening

of the performance at the Village Players Theatre, 752 Chestnut in Birmingham.

This is the chief fund-raiser of the year for the WRO, which last year logged 12,000 phone calls and received 3,680 office visits from distressed, jobless people living in Oakland County.

The organization has maintained an office in Pontiac for 11 years and recently opened in a new location at 132 Franklin Blvd.



Michael Palin is an unhappy, unemployed father, who decides to sell his children for a scientific experiment in "Monty Python's The Meaning of Life."

the movies
Louise Snider

Irreverent comics jab sacred cows as they look at life

If it is gross, absurd, terribly funny and totally disrespectful of any person or thing ordinarily demanding respect, then it's Monty Python. And if it is the Python team's latest film, then it's "Monty Python's The Meaning of Life" (R).

Yes, the gang has decided to tackle the big L — Life itself. They don't have the credentials of Mortimer Adler summing up human knowledge, but who does (except Adler, of course)?

On the other hand, they do have the advantage of an original, skewed perspective, the Pythonesque view of life. This is a matter-of-fact way of looking at life, which either dispenses with all the euphemisms or treats them with mock solemnity.

The prologue, appropriately enough, is largely unrelated to what follows. It's a tale about an insurance company wherein the fusty and feisty, shirt-sleeved scribes revolt against the young, three-piece-suit computer-oriented types who are the managers. The old men carry the day with rubber stamps and paper spinners, then literally weigh anchor and cut loose as the building sails off its foundations.

IT BECOMES a pirate ship cruising the lanes of finance and mounting raids on stodgy commercial buildings housing insurance companies and banks.

What follows this luscious prologue is a series of loosely connected episodes dealing with seven stages of life from birth to death.

The most savagely cutting of these is a satire on religion and birth control. It culminates in a lavish musical number with hundreds of urchins, nuns and even a bishop singing "Every Sperm Is Sacred."

The grossest episode is the gluttony caper. The fattest man in the world lumbers into an elegant restaurant. There, amid obsequious attention from the maitre d' he throws up all over the place, gorges himself and throws up again.

The most deadpan, clinical segment is a schoolmaster's step-by-step explanation of sexual intercourse to his bored class.

RELATED to the subject of schooling is that of sportmanship. The Python's example is the annual ritual of the faculty vs. students rugby game, in which the youngsters are left bloodied and battered on the field of battle — oops, competition.

Typical British politeness and aplomb set the tone for the visit of the Grim Reaper to a dinner party. When the hooded figure with the scythe knocks on the door, the host and hostess graciously invite him in and introduce "Mr. Reaper" to their other guests.

Moviegoers unfamiliar with Monty Python humor should be warned that it is specific, provocative and "not pretty," as Steve Martin remarked about comedy. People who take themselves and various institutions seriously will be seriously offended by all the spoofing at sacred cows.

Those warnings noted, "The Meaning of Life" is raunchy, crack-up humor like nothing else around. The Python's make their points even more telling by presenting the comments of a school of fish who are viewing the goings-on of humans.

The whole gang of six conspired to write and perform in the film. They are Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Michael Palin and Terry Jones, who also directed.

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