

It's all in the family

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He describes his Actor's Trunk Company as "primarily a touring company." The children's theater troupe has played in numerous cities, ranging from Philadelphia to Minneapolis and Houston.

"It's the most successful theater for young people in the United States. It plays to 150,000 children annually," Henry said.

THE ACTOR'S Trunk also has a touring children's theater in Canada composed of former graduates of the University of Windsor. "Sue and I act as sponsors. We provide an introduction to working in the theater for former students," he said.

"We provide the plays and advise them on business. Some of the monies go to a scholarship for undergraduate students. It's called the Henry K. Martin Theatre for Children Scholarship. The theater is non-profit and provides an initial work opportunity."

Henry added that Sue's former students also are working at Stratford and at the Shaw Festival in Canada. "We have them everywhere," he said of the students. They're in films ("Meatballs," "Atlantic City"). Some become theatrical agents. Some start their own companies.

A project Henry has been working on recently is representing the National Ballet in Canada, as he has for the last six years, for appearances at Windsor's Cleary Auditorium. The ballet will be coming to the auditorium for a production of "Don Quixote" in March.

With his many theatrical activities, he may spend the week on the road with the Actor's Trunk in the U.S., return home on Friday and leave again Sunday, flying to Toronto to meet up with the Canadian touring company or the ballet.

"I HAVE two bags packed. I drop one off and pick up the other," he said, telling how he keeps on the move easily.

Part of his efforts go toward contacting various art institutes and museums in cities of 300,000-500,000 population, setting up programs he will produce. As an example, he cited the Cincinnati Art Museum. Theater for children as an introduction to the theater arts is one program. There's also a Shakespeare-for-children program.

The Actor's Trunk productions are designed for children ages 5-10. "Our concept is we take theater to the people," he said whimsically. "Where two or more children gather."

Besides what he does for young people, Henry

has been instrumental in offering good theater, dance and concerts for adults. In his capacity as producer of shows in Canada, Henry said, "I seek out what I consider an outstanding piece of work, bring it into the community, primarily in Windsor because of the availability of Cleary."

Some of his productions include a concert by Don MacLean, whose song hits have included "American Pie" and "Starry, Starry Night" comedy improvisation by the Second City troupe from Toronto; a musical revue "Blue Champagne," and the stage hit "Billy Bishop Goes to War."

"THE OTHER thrust," Henry continued, "is an attempt to bring outstanding Canadian theater companies to Windsor. I'm talking with the Shaw Festival."

Henry began his career with satirical revues in the late 1960s and early 1970s, playing colleges and cabarets. At one time, then-unknown Lily Tomlin was a member of his troupe. Revues were played at Jerry's and at the Red Mill, both in Detroit, and at the Zodiac (now the site of the Excalibur restaurant and lounge) in Southfield.

As a director, Henry has done industrial shows for Ford Tractor, Armco Steel Corp., Armour Foods and Pepperidge, traveling all over the U.S. Directing industrial shows is a real plum for him.

"That's where the money is," he said.

At one time, Henry was an actor in TV commercials, but he doesn't do them anymore. "I'm just too busy."

Working in other phases of the profession is more satisfying for him. "I would rather provide the opportunity and be in control than be an actor," he said firmly.

Sue stressed, "An actor's never in creative control."

The Martins' daughter Pamela is looking toward a future on the stage. At Seaborn High School, she won the state's Michigan Championship in forensic oral interpretation two years in a row, performing both as a single and as a duo.

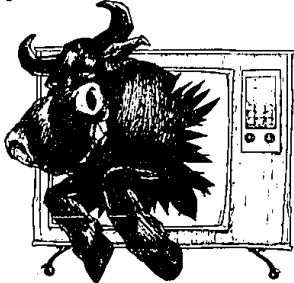
SAID HENRY, "David's thrust is sports. He'd like to be a professional baseball player. He made the All-Star Team in Birmingham for five years as a catcher."

In the theater, "David does most of the tech work in the children's shows and fashion shows, that I do sets and lights for, for center companies, primarily Westland and Southfield. He also acts in the children's shows we do in shopping centers. Pamela is always in the children's shows."

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