

# Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



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## Sharing

### 200 actors work together to make TAP shows hits

By Gail Walsh

**A**LL ACTORS require the gift of sharing to become a member of TAP Ltd., a Michigan touring company, based in Farmington Hills, which performs everything from musical revues to psychodramas.

Founder-director-producer Michael J. Klier said of his 200-member company, which is beginning its 11th year, "We are out for the company to work together, not to make a star. We show up as the people who have an opportunity to share with you."

Klier believes if he shares honesty and trust with his performers, then the performers will in turn share their honesty and trust with the audience.

The full company doesn't necessarily all perform at the same time, Klier explained. More often it's a case of several smaller groups performing in various shows throughout the area.

**THE COMPANY** can perform popular Broadway tunes or it can create a show to fit the needs of the customer, Klier said. For example, AutoWorld in Flint wanted a show about cars, so Klier created "Shake, Rattle and Roll."

One of TAP's trademarks is friendliness. The actors greet each individual in the audience after every show.

"We are people-oriented and we want to know who shared their time with us. We're good enough that we don't have to hide behind the stage," he said.

Interaction with the audience is another TAP specialty.

*'The key theme we push is love,' with shows that are as pretty as they are hilarious. 'We always have fun when we work.'*

— Michael J. Klier  
TAP Ltd. founder

The shows include a game called "Guess That Number" or "Buy You a Drink" in which a prize is given away by the sponsoring establishment to the person who correctly guesses the name of a song after hearing the introduction. Klier said the biggest prize given away was a trip to Brazil during a fund-raiser.

**IN ADDITION** to house parties and children's theater, the company also performs at rehearsal dinners and wedding receptions. Klier said, "The key theme we push is love," with shows that are as pretty as they are hilarious.

"We always have fun when we work," he said. Klier notes a trend in audience preference for older music, especially that from the '30s and '40s with Gershwin, Porter and Berlin among the more popular composers. "Broadway is always hot," he said.

Although light musical revues represent the company's major offerings, the company also presents serious productions on topics such as substance abuse and teen-age drinking.

One psychodrama called "Who Says I Can't..." deals with teen-age alcoholism.

Klier is a graduate of the University of Detroit with a degree in theater. He spent six weeks at the University of Dublin in 1972 as English acting coach for the school's production of "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" by Edward Albee.

Commenting on the experience, Klier said, "The art of the theater is a universal language where the rules are the same. If you believe in something, then the audience must."

In addition to his work with the Theatre of the Arts Production — otherwise known as TAP — Klier teaches greenhouse and landscaping classes. He said, "Art and nature have a lot in common. Any director worth his salt will take notice of that and also be able to put it on the stage."

Klier recently spent eight weeks directing a patriotic musical revue performed by 22 10-year-olds who went to France for three weeks on an exchange program.

"WHEN I FIRST met these kids, they couldn't sing or dance and they did not want to learn either," he said. But they had to learn because a performance was a requirement of the trip.

Klier said he felt the best way to go about it was to treat the children as if



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

TAP Ltd. principals actress Elizabeth Porter (left), piano player Rebecca Klier and director Michael Klier run through a number.

they were adults, using a sense of humor and sharing.

The previously disinterested children rewarded Klier by presenting him with a plaque and poem they wrote to express their gratitude before leaving the country.

"They learned a great deal during that time but I probably learned more. If you believe in the people, you work and give to them. Then they will always give back to you," he said.

Klier and Robert Leider of Southfield collaborate on all theatrical material, with Klier's wife Rebecca respon-

sible for all the musical scoring.

REBECCA KLIER is a Joplin, Mo., native and a graduate of John Brown University in Arkansas where she majored in piano. She teaches music and drama at West Maple Middle School in Birmingham.

TAP Ltd. actress Elizabeth Porter of Detroit, a graduate of the American Academy of Arts in New York, who calls herself the "Queen of Tap," said of Klier: "Michael treats people as human beings. He is both friend and employer."

Klier, Rebecca and Porter all agree

TAP shows represent "as wholesome and clean entertainment as you can get without being corny." There is nothing off-color in the shows "and you can always bring the kids."

In fact, 12-year-old Trey Klier attends all the shows. He appears to be following his parents' example by receiving a part in Detroit Country Day's production, "A Is for Apple."

When asked if he would like to pursue a career in theater, he said, "I don't think so. I want to lead a normal life, plus I'm having enough troubles with algebra."

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