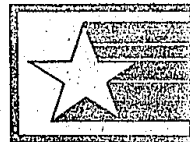


# Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



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## Light and bright: 'Ornaments' laser show is more colorful this year

By Ethel Simmons  
staff writer

**L**AST YEAR, the Cranbrook Institute of Science offered the laser-light show "Ornaments" for the holiday season.

"It became an instant tradition," said Laser Coordinator Mel Drumm, who also put together this year's even more spectacular "Ornaments" show.

What makes a difference is the new system that has been installed in the museum's Planetarium. "I spent 300 hours programming the show for the old system," Drumm said. "This time I spent probably another 100 hours to convert and perfect it."

Cranbrook's state-of-the-art equipment has the power of an outdoor laser projector. For the indoor shows, images are projected onto the planetarium's 30-foot dome.

Describing the system, Drumm said, "The new one is bigger than anything you'll find in large planetariums. It can fill the entire dome with images."

HE EXPLAINED, "We don't have the clearance and equipment to do all that," so at present, only the top of the ceiling is being used. During a performance, geometric and representational designs dance overhead, accompanied by recorded music.

In contrast to the old system, which could only offer images in red, blue, green and yellow, the laser light shows now are visible in "new color-

ation and intensity." Every color is available, including aquas, pinks, violets and shades of yellow and orange.

Also, new optional systems manipulate the beam. "It's all digitally controlled," he said.

Another plus is better animation. Frosty the Snowman, for example, "This year his hands and arms move," Drumm said.

In the planetarium a few days before the "Ornaments" show opened, Drumm and Raymond Bullock, coordinator of astronomy, presented a rumpus of what would be in the holiday presentation.

Colorful ornaments are among the geometric or kaleidoscopic images viewers see, and there are also representational figures, such as a horse or a boy.

DRUMM WANTS to give credit to artist Doug Goudie, who did the representational graphics for "Ornaments" and for "Lasers: Rocking in Space," Cranbrook's first laser light show using the new equipment, which ran during November.

He said the entire laser light show program is operated with just two staff members and two volunteers who act as technicians. He singled out technician Dan Pinkos for praise.

Watching "Ornaments" should put anyone in a festive mood. Said Drumm, "It's real pretty, happy, upbeat. It has music. You can sing along with it. It's real colorful."

Songs that share laser light designs

include a medley with "Twelve Days of Christmas," "Frosty the Snowman" and "White Christmas."

For "Ornaments," children as young as 3 years of age will be admitted to the planetarium. Showings are at 3:45 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays through December, as well as at 2:15 p.m. Thursdays-Fridays, Dec. 26-27 and 30-31.

ADMISSION TO the family show is \$1.25 in addition to regular museum admission of \$3 for adults, \$2 for students and senior citizens. More information is available by calling the Cranbrook Institute of Science in Bloomfield Hills at 645-3230.

The museum, which has been presenting laser shows since July 1982, began having problems with the old system this spring. "The laser we'd been using was discontinued and parts weren't available," Drumm said. "The second week in July it failed completely."

A proposal for new equipment at \$82,000 — about the cost of the original investment — was taken by the director to the board of governors.

In the meantime, with laser shows temporarily discontinued, the museum's attendance dropped off 92 percent on Friday nights and 78 percent on Saturdays. Drumm explained that the light show pulls in the crowds, but that visitors are also encouraged to visit the rest of the museum. "They have to stay here and look around."

Continued on Next Page



Laser coordinator Mel Drumm looks collingward as he projects images on the dome of the Cranbrook Planetarium for the laser-light show "Ornaments." The holiday family show continues

through December at the Institute of Science in Bloomfield Hills. Cranbrook's new laser system is said to have the most powerful indoor projector in the country.

## You can see, hear, feel the spell of Christmas

Performances of "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens continue through Sunday, Dec. 22, at Meadow Brook Theatre on the Oakland University campus in Rochester Hills. For ticket information, call the box office at 377-3300.

The cantankerous old tighwad Ebenezer Scrooge is up to his usual miserly tricks in Meadow Brook's delightful production of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol." This is Meadow Brook's fourth year making merry with director Charles Nolte's adaptation of the holiday classic, and it seems Nolte polishes the magic a little more each season by perfecting new details. Maybe he's changed nothing and it just seems new after 12 months of forgetting how wonderful the old story is. For ticket information, call the theatrical stops pulled out.

This is a production to delight the senses. The way smell of candle drifts all the way to the back row when Scrooge puffs it out, and we hear his greed when his practiced fingers shuffle through a stack of bills with the dexterity of a Charles Nolte's adaption card shark. Our mouths water to see the table

groganing with Christmas delicacies at the Fezziwigs' jolly office party and to hear the Ghost of Christmas Present give his lip-smacking litany in praise of food.

This year Nolte seems to have perfected sounds to enrich the production. As in previous years, carollers in 1830s dress greet theatergoers in the lobby. The collection of voices seems better matched than ever before. More voices, these whispered anonymously over the sound system, nicely underscore the doom-to-be when Ebenezer looks into the future at his own funeral.

THE SOUND of rain permeates Scrooge's glimpse of what is to be.



Cathie Breidenbach

It gushes out of overflowing gutters, sloshes through drainpipes and sounds real enough to make people sitting in the lobby warm in the cold office. Thom Haneline returns as a fine Bob Cratchit, and Jayne Houdyshell returns to double as the sensible Mrs. Cratchit, and as Mrs. Fezziwig, and as Philip Locker, who plays her knock-kneed spouse, Mr. Fezziwig, are an irresistible pair who radiate jolly glints. The Fezziwigs' good humor is as infectious as someone with a case of non-stop giggles around break out with at least a smile, if not a belly laugh.

Theatrical razz-ma-

tax in "A Christmas Carol" includes a frightful specter taller than any Globetrotter, a trap door belching forth a ghost amid sulfurous orange smoke, and a fireworks blast to rival Haydn's "Surprise."

The set by Barry Griffith is a marvel of fluid locomotion — both charming and functional, and lighting by Reid Johnson is another carefully perfected detail of the production.

THIRTY PEOPLE make up the able cast led by an outstanding ensemble of Phillip Locker, Glen Allen Pruet, Jayne Houdyshell, Barbara Barringer, Paul Hopper, Joey L. Golden and Wayne David Parker, who each play two or three different roles. The white stuff that just a few hours earlier had been a tribulation becomes anew a magic, white wonder touched by Dickens's Christmas Spirit.

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