# Cast excels but 'play' lacks any real purpose

Performances of the Meadow Brook Theatre production of "84 Charing Cross Road" by Helene Hanff, adaped by James Roose-Eugras, continue through Sunday, Feb. 23, on the Oakland University campus in Rochester Hills.

"84 Charing Cross Road, offices of Marks & Co. Road, offices of

"84 Charing Cross Road" really isn't a play. It is an intriguing character study of Helone Hanfi, an American writer with a fetlish for old books and a forthright, with way of expressing herself in letters. The Meadow Brook production does well by this collection of letters that never quite makes it as a play despite an expert cast and fine staging.

The script is entirely structured around reading letters aloud — some 20 years of trans-Alantle correspondence in the guise of book orders between Hanff and a stiffly correct select of antique books in London, one Frank Doel

Booksellers.
Action in the "play" is inconsequential. Except for Hanff shuffling from typewrifer to bookshelf to scruly soals, as doesn't really do anything much except talk. Thank heavers, Jeanna Arond as Helene talks well, because the entire play depends on booking the audience with the wit and intelligence of her personality. Arrold pulse partly because she's so adept at bring-ring out every nuance of humor in the letters, which change hardly at all over the years spanned by the play.

HER HELENE is a big, frizzy-haired spinster with a robust way of talking that belies the lonellness of her life. Her friends, for the most part, are the great minds of history — from Roman historians through the 18th-century po-

els and essayista. That's not bad company, except for the fact that they're all long dead. She spends her days alone, cranking our state of the stat

Barringer, Lit Zweifler, Erle Johnson, Paul Hopper and Wayne David Parker). Paul Hopper and Wayne David Parker) and their lives as they move books around in the lives as they move books around in the charming bookshop set, which is brighter and atrier than the description of it.

Director David Regal does well at manufacturing movement for the sake of movement and making us care about the plebian lives of the nice people who work in the bookshop during the years of Helene's and Frank's correspondence. Still, it must be a chalenge making a play out of an autobiographical character sketch that was better off as a book.

This is an old-fashioned play, older even than the timely mentions of Churchill and the coronation of Elizabeth II or Eltery Queen mysteries on

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"84 CHABING Cross Road" make of the CHABING Cross Road in the CHABING CROSS Road Cross

### table talk

#### Mardi Gras

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A Mardi Gras celebration on Tuesday, Feb. 11, "Fat Tuesday," will be held at Jack McCarthy's Restaurant in Keege Harbor. McCarthy, a Louisdann native, will offer a multicourse dinner on the radiational eve of Lent. Crawlish, redfish, shrimp and oysters will be among the seafood served at the feast combining Cajun food and dishes of old New Orleans. There will be two seatings, at 6.30 and 8 p.m., for dinner priced at \$30 per person. For reservations, call 682-5522.

#### Cajun-Creole

CAJUIT-CFEOTE
The fifth annual Cajun-Croole Dinner will be given at 7 pm. MondayTuesday, Feb. 24-25, at the Lark in
West Bloomfield. Duck with Cajun
suauge (file gumbo as well as fresh
erawish etouffee with dirty rice and
red beans will be among the many
courses. Oysters Rockfeller with be
the original with watercress rather
than the creatz version with spinach,
said owner Jim Lark. Doug Jacobs
and the Red Garter Band will play

Dixicland music. Dinner is \$60 per person excluding beverage, tax or gratuity. For reservations, call 644-4466.

#### Cards honored

Dining cards Irom other restaurants are being honored during February, which is "Get Acquainted Month" at the Kingsley Inn in Bloomfield Hills. This is the fourth year the Kingsley has offered a "dinner card" special. One free entree will be provided when another of equal or greater value is purchased.

#### Valentine's Day

Valentine's Lay

A candielight dinner for two on

A candielight dinner for two on

A candielight Suy, Friday, Feb. 14, will

be served again this year at the

Clarkston Cafe. Dinner for two is a

choice of rack of lamb with beure

rouge sauce or Chateaubriand with

Bernalse sauce. Soup, salad, pate a

chou potatoes, a bouquettere of fresh

vegetables and dessert of Amoretic

toc cream bombe is included for \$34

for two. Planist Jim Banjor will play

romantic music from 8 p.m. romantic music from 8 p.m.

# live again on stage

Old days

"Vaudeville or Bust" is being presented through Saturday, March 1, at True Grist Dinner Theatre in Homer. Performances are Wednesdays-Sundays the year-round, For more information and reservatinns, call (317) 568-4151. The production is set at the height of vaudeville's popularity and the beginning of World War 1. Characters featured include W.C. Field and Bert Lahr. The show offers songs by Irving Berlin, Victor Height Chart and Cabert and Cabert



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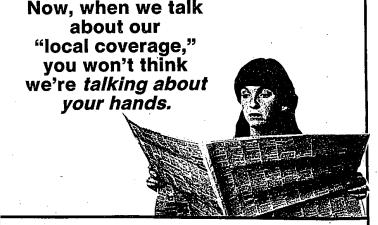
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