



## Mamas and Papas are best of evening

Meadow Brook Music Festival's three-group homage to the 1960s on Saturday should have opened with the Mamas and the Papas. Mackenzie Phillips of TV-sitcom "One Day At A Time" fame and her dad, John Phillips, stole the night, and it's unfortunate that they came on last while the audience was doing its usual dashing out of the concert grounds to beat the rush on I-75.

The people who left missed "California Dreaming," easily the best number of the evening. Mackenzie, a young woman with an appealing voice, wonderful movements and great wit, gracefully thanked "those who stayed."

Everything seemed to happen backwards at this concert. The Mamas and the Papas should have opened with "California Dreaming" and Spanky McFarlane's strong rendition of "Sunday Will Never Be the Same." Denny Doherty, fourth member of the group, came alive while Spanky was singing.

THE GROUP SWUNG into the loose-limbed, folk-rock, easy sound it's famous for too late in the evening. All four are excellent musicians. They got off on the wrong foot doing numbers that alluded to '60s culture.

It was a misalliance of audience and musicians all night long, and oddly enough, the best group of the three that sang Friday night bore the brunt of the discomfort evinced by the audience. Mama Cass, who choked on a

sandwich and died, and Michelle Phillips, who's no longer with the group, have left a void. But the down-home, good-family feeling and the lively, seasoned musicianship is still there.

The Mamas and the Papas gamely played on, despite skunks that came too near the pavilion, the departing crowds and the mixed reactions of the audience.

The Association, looking faintly ominous dressed in snow-white suits (singer Larry Ramos in shades and a wide-brimmed hat), opened with "Windy," and collected lots of applause with "Double My Love." Borrowing from the Mamas and the Papas' use of cowbells, marimbas, tambourines — simple instruments combined with sophisticated electric guitars and heavy amplification on drums and piano — the Association did a medley from "The Big Chill," "Just Walk Away" and a good rendition of "Along Come Mary." It's a smooth bunch, and the group finished as it had begun, with the crowd pleaser "Windy."

GARY LEWIS and the Playboys, the opening act, looked like the kids who play guitars in the garage next door. Dressed in yellow socks, black tights, leather pants, loud shirts, long hair and punk hairdos (which were not part of the '60s dress code), the Playboys kept up a loud, steady beat through eight songs.

## Baritone returns to 'hometown'

By Ethel Simmons  
staff writer

I caught up with Lewis Dale von Schlanbusch at Logan Airport in Boston on the phone, that is. He was between planes and headed for a combination work/rest stint before heading to Detroit for a weekend appearance at the Meadow Brook Music Festival.

The baritone from Birmingham graduated from Seaholm High School, went on to college studies in music and theater and then to a career as an opera and Broadway pops night singer.

His family still lives in the Detroit area and will be out in full force to hear him perform when Meadow Brook presents its Laser Light Spectacular and "Music from the Great Motion Pictures" at 8:30 p.m. Friday-Saturday.

Under the baton of acclaimed conductor Erich Kunzel, the Meadow Brook Festival Orchestra will play movie hits, and Schlanbusch will be soloist for several numbers.

HE WAS good-natured about being "included in the laser spectacular."

He said he did a show last fall with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and his name wasn't even on the program, but his appearance there led to the Meadow Brook booking.

This time, the word is out that he will be performing near his hometown. The general public, as well as family and friends, is being elated in his appearance.

"I'll be doing a handful of numbers," he said. "There's a new arrangement of an old western song, 'O.K. Corral.'"

The nine-minute piece is about the legendary gunfight. Schlanbusch said the score is by Dmitri Tomin, who scored so many big westerns including "Gunfight at the O.K. Corral."

Schlanbusch also will sing "Moon River" from "Breakfast at Tiffany's" and "Heartlight," a Neal Diamond

hit, only this time, "an extraterrestrial will appear."

The singer said he received a theater and music degree from Olivet College and then got a master's in vocal performance from Indiana University. He was at the university 1976-82, remaining on to teach voice and perform in the opera program.

AFTER THAT, he started to break away to more pop-oriented music. "Broadway-type nights, the 'Best of Broadway.' I've been doing that for four or five years," he said.

The new turn in his career came when "I was introduced to Erich Kunzel, one of the leading pops conductors in the country."

Schlanbusch found himself on the crest of opportunity to perform this kind of music.

"Like the Meadow Brook thing, there are so many more festivals across the country."

"I do find it enjoyable," he said, talking about singing Broadway show tunes. "It's quite different from being in the opera, where you're facing the audience and hoping the public catches on."

Broadway nights aren't limited to summer festivals, either. Schlanbusch can appear on this kind of program year-round. "Lots of orchestras have pop series, along with the classic," he said.

Doing easily recognizable tunes has its rewards. "That's the satisfying thing. You see people's eyes light up," he said.

DURING THE last few years, the baritone has sung at Rodgers and Hart evenings and done highlights from Lerner and Lowe, to name just a few of the nights' themes.

"I did Cole Porter last night in Chicago at Ravinia," he said. "Friday and Saturday night I sang at the Hollywood Bowl. We picked from all the classic Broadway shows" — everything from Jerome Kern to "Cats."

"It was a historical outline of the Broadway musical theater in America."

Schlanbusch, who put the "von" back in the family name, is the son of Sue and Lowell Schlanbusch.

"Dad's an Episcopal priest and has a parish in Madison Heights. The



Lewis Dale von Schlanbusch from Birmingham will sing at Meadow Brook Music Festival this weekend.

family now lives in Sterling Heights," he said.

The family was raised in Birmingham. Since becoming a singing star, Schlanbusch lived briefly in Connecticut.

"The last year or so I've been sort of a gypsy," he said. "Last month I purchased a house in Berkeley, Mich., which I rent out part time to my sister."

Looking back to his years at Seaholm, he said, "I can blame that for where I am now."

He did "Guys and Dolls," and "South Pacific," which opened the school's new Wagner Auditorium, with him singing Lt. Cable.

Before returning to Detroit for his Meadow Brook appearance, Schlanbusch had planned to spend a few

days on a yacht with conductor Kunzel, he said.

"I DO A LOT of sailing with Erich Kunzel," he said. "He is having a new yacht built for him, but it's not ready."

Instead of Massachusetts, Schlanbusch is going with Kunzel to Maine, where they will look over the music for a new project.

Anticipating her son's visit to Meadow Brook, the singer's mother, Sue Schlanbusch, said earlier this week, "We're very thrilled for him. It's something he's worked hard for."

She said Lewis is the only professional singer in the family, but that her daughter is a country and Christian folk singer, who performs at weddings and other events.

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