

Developing acting skills

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Nahan said, "Teaching clarifies my own skills as a performing artist. My most important growth as an artist has come in these five years."

Dr. Patricia Kihn, an actress who teaches voice classes at the conservatory, said, "I've had people who came to learn how to speak at a board meeting, as well as lawyers, policeman and telephone operators."

The slim, energetic brunette, with the tilt of her native Scottish accent still evident after 22 years in the United States, says, "People neglect voice and it's an incredibly important instrument."

She projects enthusiasm and seems to be moving even when standing still.

Kihn earned a bachelor of fine arts degree at the University of Detroit, a master's in theater at the University of Michigan and a doctorate in speech and communication at Wayne State.

SHE SAID, "People need encouragement as they learn to walk about on stage." Encouragement is part of her teaching style.

In her classes she puts into practice some of the theories of Christine Linkletter, a British specialist in voice training in the sixth techniques of English theater. Linkletter's belief is, "The things that hold back voice are the same things that hold back freedom," Kihn said.

Because people use their voices all the time without thinking much about it, they assume developing an effective voice is easier than it is, Kihn said. "Building a voice is a process." She works on the process in class and gives students homework they can do in the car to make use of the limbo time spent getting from one place to another.

Divina Cook, a well-known Detroit actress who was one of the founders of the Attie Theatre, teaches the method approach to students preparing for a career in the performing arts.

COOK GREW UP in New York City and received theater training at Uta Hagen's H.B. Studio and under Lee Strasberg at the Strasberg Institute. After a stint in Los Angeles, she came to Detroit and stayed because she saw an opportunity to do something worthwhile.

"Method acting is a way of becoming a human being on stage," she said. Her classes use exercises and techniques to make students vulnerable to stimuli and put them in touch with their humanity.

"Sometimes actors forget to think as the character on stage," Cook said. Using the method approach, actors learn to think and react the way their characters do.

Even on stage the traditional actor maintains a clear sense that he's an actor pretending to be somebody

else. His mental eye is always watching and judging what he's doing and thinking about the next cue.

In contrast, the method actor strives to become the character, to think and feel and react as the character does.

Cook sets high standards for theater. She said, "There's a tendency to worship the god of mediocrity and settle for the easy road. Art has to strive for something more, for those moments of true genius."

She asks her students not to settle for stereotypical interpretations of character but "to allow that part of oneself that is truly yours to come through."

CONSERVATORY instructors take pride in the supportive atmosphere in classes. Cook said, "We learn a great deal about each other, sometimes very personal things. Each group becomes a family that gives and receives a lot of love."

Purpose of the conservatory is to encourage the development of the performing arts. Many individuals who take the Exploratory series will never become professional performers, but their understanding and appreciation of what goes into the art expands as a result of their training. They become educated as arts consumers and that bodes well for the standard of theater in the Detroit area.

table talk

Tea parties

Afternoon tea parties for children and adults will be 2-4 p.m. Friday-Sunday in the Garden Court of the Hotel Pontchartrain in Detroit, to benefit the Evergreen Endowment of Children's Hospital of Michigan. The WOMC mascot, WOM-Cee, will greet guests. For children, the tea includes a peanut butter and jelly sandwich or hot dog with potato chips, a pumpkin-patch punch and an admission ticket to the Festival of Trees at Cobo Hall. Tea for adults

includes imported teas and non-caffeine herb teas, scones and Devonshire cream, a glass of imported sherry and an admission ticket to the Festival of Trees. Tea is priced at \$4.25 for children, \$9.75 for adults. For reservations, call 955-0200, Ext. 3417.

Sweet village

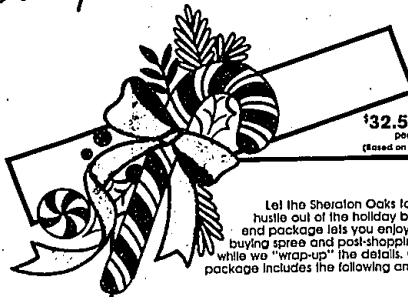
A Gingerbread Village constructed by 14 area chefs and 22 culinary students will be displayed from Thanksgiving Day through Tuesday,

Dec. 2, at the Festival of Trees, at Cobo Hall in Detroit. The 27 village buildings are made entirely from edible ingredients. Individual houses will be for sale at the event. Chef Duane Christ of the Bakers Leaf in Southfield has created one of the buildings. Two teams of students from Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge Campus in Farmington Hills also made buildings, under the direction of coordinating chef Joe Bender. For more information, call 745-5373.

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