

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



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STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer

Tom Christopher and Liz Brooks rehearse a scene from the St. Dunstan's Guild of Cranbrook production of "You Can't Take It With You." The comedy classic will be presented at 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, June 2-3, and Thursday-Saturday, June 6-8, in the outdoor Greek Theatre at Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills. For ticket information, call 644-0527 anytime.

upcoming things to do

• **CONCERT SERIES**
The "Jazz to the Hill" concert series will be held at the Troy Hilton each Wednesday evening beginning June 7 through Aug. 23, from 5-10 p.m. Following is the schedule of entertainment: June 7, Spyro Gyra; June 14, Ramsey Lewis; June 21, Lionel Hampton; June 28, Chic Corea; July 5, Steps Ahead; July 12,

Fattburger; July 19, Herbie Mann; July 26, Norma Jean Bell and The All Stars; Aug. 2, Angela Bofeld; Aug. 9, Dixie Gillespie; Aug. 16, Alexander Zovile and Kirk Whalum; Aug. 23, Shadowfax; Aug. 30, Grand Finale — to be announced. General admission is \$10 in advance, \$12 at

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TV star ends season by doing stage play

By Ethel Simmons
staff writer

ACTOR ALAN Campbell loves to work.

The personable young star of "Jake and the Fatman" explains his work addiction as the reason he is appearing in the Birmingham Theatre production of "The Nerd," even though he just finished filming a season of episodes for his popular CBS-TV series, in Hawaii.

Big, blond and baby-faced (with dimples), he is a handsome contrast to his slim, pretty, dark-haired wife, Nova, who is with him in Birmingham during the run of the comedy by playwright Larry Shue.

"We were apart when I was in Hawaii for five months," Campbell said in a backstage interview. "She came about every three weeks." When the season ended, he spent three weeks at home with his wife in Santa Monica, Calif. After Birmingham, he will have just a couple more weeks at home before going back to work on "Jake and the Fatman." The series has been renewed for its third season and 22 new episodes.

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DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Alan Campbell, who plays the assistant P.A. on "Jake and the Fatman," heads the cast of "The Nerd" at the Birmingham Theatre. In the Larry Shue comedy, he is the young architect who has to contend with the outrageous, nerdy title character.

Nerdy guy brings audience laughs

Performances of the Birmingham Theatre production of "The Nerd" continue through Sunday, June 18. For ticket information call the box office at 644-3533.

By Barbara Michals
special writer

Though the improbable plot of "The Nerd" carries absurdity to the nth degree, the Larry Shue comedy at the Birmingham Theatre is riotously funny.

Supposedly people laugh at slapstick because it makes them feel superior to the poor goof on stage. With "The Nerd" there is also the recognition factor. We've all gone to school or worked with one, dated one, or even been related to one.

Hopefully, though, we've been spared what happens to Shue's hapless hero Willum (Alan Campbell), who has a nerd descend on him for



Barbara Michals

an unlimited stay, disrupting his life and career.

As the nerdy Rick Steadman, P.J. Benjamin so perfectly embodies the concept that one can almost predict he will exit the bathroom with toilet paper stuck to his shoe, leave his fly unzipped, or eat the centers out of all the deviled eggs.

BENJAMIN'S inflections and mannerisms are as supremely nerdy as his appearance — taped-together eyeglasses, ill-fitting suspended trousers and the requisite pen-filled

plastic pouch in the pocket of his white short-sleeved shirt. (For some strange reason he doesn't wear white socks until Act Two.)

Some years back Rick saved Willum's life in Vietnam, and though Willum has never actually met Rick he sent him an open-ended invitation. Rick's churlish behavior, however, pushes Willum's gratitude and commitment to friendship to the limits of human endurance.

Campbell as Willum and Todd Roche as his girlfriend Tanny are both very likeable but bland, a fault

that is not the actors' since they are not given much character to work with. Both are unbelievably multi-dimensional and fascinating.

Though they have been asked to make a commitment to each other. All the best one-liners go to Willum's chum Axel, the cynical, witty drama critic (smoothly portrayed by Harley Weston. Playwrights delight in presenting drama critics as eccentrics who always threaten to write their reviews before seeing the play. It's often difficult enough when one has seen the play.)

Seemingly dependent on alcohol for his inspiration, Axel injects humorous observations on Rick's antics and finally concocts his own screwball solution to getting rid of the nerd.

AS WALDGRAVE, Willum's domineering, demanding employer.

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