

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



Thursday, September 7, 1989 O&E

(O7D)

A busy mother

Quints' mom takes time out to sing in musical revue

"There Is a Beautiful Land," an original musical revue, will be presented in dinner theater format Friday and Saturday, Sept. 8 and 9, with dinner at 6:30 p.m. and the performance at 8; Saturday, Sept. 16, with dinner at 6:30 p.m. and the performance at 8; and Sunday, Sept. 17, with dinner at 1:30 p.m. and the performance at 3, at the Ridgedale Players playhouse in Troy. Tickets are \$17.50. For reservations, call 542-0427.

"I was at the end of my rope, needing to get out of the house for a couple of hours when some friends from church encouraged me to audition."
— Mary Jo Wilson

By Kevin Lawrence
special writer

IMAGINE SEVEN-MONTH-OLD quintuplets in one room. They're on the floor, the sofa, in walkers and highchairs. Everywhere. All vocalizing loudly and, because of their mother, very happily — a quintuplet quintet.

Each day, their very busy mother has to contend with 45 diaper changes and the preparation and feeding of 25 bottles of formula.

How does she do it? In this case, with more than a little help from her husband and friends, the secret is to get away for a few hours from the round-the-clock demands of parenting times six (the quintuplets plus their 3-year-old brother).

What does Mary Jo Wilson do with this time? She sings.

"Thank heavens for the Ridgedale Players," said Wilson, sitting in the living room of her Avon Township home. "I was at the end of my rope, needing to get out of the house for a couple of hours when some friends from church encouraged me to audition."

with work and all, for the past few years I didn't have any time to pursue singing other than at church or at an occasional wedding throughout the year. But with quintuplets pacing yourself is everything. And you do need time for yourself, to collect yourself. It's easy to feel scattered if I don't get out of the house for those few hours a week for rehearsal or voice lessons."

Musically, Wilson's first love is opera, "Mozart and Puccini." She is now back studying voice with a local instructor. "I practice whatever I'm working on by singing to the babies. They get a big kick out of it, and really respond. Even try to sing along. It's the funniest thing when I hit a high note and one of the babies tries to imitate it."

As it turns out, the quintuplets enjoy applause much like performers everywhere. "They like it when you clap. It calms them down when they're fussing, and they smile."



Mary Jo Wilson of Avon Township has five babies, seven months old. But she still needs a break from her hectic home schedule — and is appearing in the Ridgedale Players musical

production "There Is a Beautiful Land." She has studied singing since high school and still takes voice lessons. The babies are Cameron (left), Anthony, Shelby, Rebecca and Elizabeth.

Two times a week, Wilson ends her day rehearsing with the Ridgedale Players from 7-11 p.m., before returning home to get as much rest as nighttime for a family with quintuplets allows. "They really don't fuss at night or want to be fed. We hear heart and breathing monitors that keep us on our toes all night. Sometimes their heart rate slows or they forget to breathe — which isn't unusual for babies born prematurely. But they'll just grow out of it, eventually."

RIDGEDALE PLAYERS' "There Is a Beautiful Land" is a musical revue of song and dance celebrating the world's great places. Wilson sings the role of, appropriately, the mother of a girl who wins the lottery and sets out to see America and then the world.

Hit songs featured in the show, conceived and directed by Ridgedale members Dan See and Kerry Price, include "Give My Regards to Broadway," "Hurray for Hollywood," "Yellow Rose of Texas" and "California, Here I Come." The performance will be preceded by a full dinner, prepared and served by the Ridgedale Players.

This production is not a part of the

regular, 1989-90 season lineup. Mark Carley, Ridgedale's publicity director, explained that proceeds from the show go into the improvement fund for the playhouse. "We're a nonprofit group that has brought community theater to Detroit-area audiences for the last 55 years. Maintaining the playhouse structure and improving it consumes a big portion of our budget," he said.

With an expanded schedule of nine performances per show to accommodate increasing ticket sales, Ridgedale Players offers for the 1989-90 season: Neil Simon's "The Prisoner of Second Avenue," "Greaser Tuna" — in which two performers play 10-15 characters each; Stephen Sondheim's "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" and "Much Ado About Murder." The last show is part of the new wave of audience participation theater. In this production, theatergoers try to solve a murder mystery and even get to interrogate suspects.

"We're holding an open house on Sunday, from 2-5 p.m.," Carley said. "We encourage anyone interested in theater as an actor, singer or working behind the scenes, to drop by."

The new season's schedule is as follows:

- "Prisoner of Second Avenue," Fridays-Sundays, Nov. 3-5, 10-12 and 17-19. Tickets, \$7
- "Greaser Tuna," Fridays-Sundays, Jan. 12-14, 19-21 and 26-28. Tickets, \$7
- "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," Fridays-Sundays, March 9-11, 16-18 and 23-25. Tickets, \$8
- "Much Ado About Murder," Fridays-Sundays, May 4-6, 11-13 and 18-20. Tickets, \$7

Curtain time is 8 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays, 7 p.m. Sundays except last Sunday of run, when matinee at 3 p.m. Senior discount prices are available.

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September 9 Opening Reception — 6:30 - 10:00 p.m.
September 12 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. and September 12 7:30 - 8:30 p.m. "The Expressive Teapot," talk by Paul Kotula.
September 19 - October 24 "Pre-Columbian Art: The Lost Cities and Last People of Ancient Mexico," a six part slide lecture by Professor Michael J. Farrell, 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

September 10: R.H. Factor
September 11: Bugs Bockus
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September 18: Alexander Zonjic
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