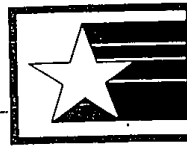


Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



(A-E) Thursday, May 24, 1989

Save the Attic

Grass-roots fund-raising helps out

By Cathie Broidenbach
special writer

UNLESS THE ATTIC Theatre can raise \$550,000 by the end of August this year, the Detroit theater that dares to produce first-run plays, innovative interpretations of the classics and off-the-beaten-track musicals and dramas will close permanently.

Attic Artistic Director Lavina Noyor announced the theater's dire financial position in March, a devoted group of Attic supporters from Bloomfield Hills responded with a grass-roots fund-raising plans of its own. Seven season ticket holders — Mercedes and John Lichtwardt, Gerald and Jane Conway, Bob and Julie Flynn and Betty Page — decided to throw two theater parties to help fill the Attic's depleted coffers.

Good ideas, once launched, spread like dandelion fluff in a high wind. Because the Attic is dear to the hearts of the seven friends, they hope their idea takes root all over metropolitan Detroit, among those who value the Attic's adventurous artistic spirit, its professional productions, and its dedication to premiering new works.

Barrie Werba, the Attic's director of development, says, "It's important to develop new voices for the stage." The seven friends heartily agree. Page says, "The theater consistently has innovative shows that whet your appetite for the new and different."

BETTY PAGE remembers how the idea for the "Theater Evenings" was born. "We were sitting around at T.J.'s (a Detroit restaurant) before going to see 'Hamlet' at the Attic. The business of the theater threatening to close down had been in the paper, and Mercedes (Lichtwardt) said, 'We can't let that happen. Let's get up a potluck and invite friends.'"

Page explains their immediate objectives were to bolster attendance and bring in contributions, and long-

range, they hoped to interest people in becoming subscribers.

Mercedes Lichtwardt says simply, "The Attic is the best theater in town. It presents plays that otherwise we'd never have the opportunity to see. Where else would you see 'Sand Mountain' or 'Fiaf' except at the Attic?"

The seven friends conceived two "Theater Evenings," beginning with cocktails and a buffet dinner, then car-pooling to Detroit's New Center Area to attend an Attic production. They invited friends interested in theater to attend one or both parties — the first, was April 27, to the world premiere of "Coda" by Detroit playwright Bill Harris, and the second, Saturday, June 9, to "Songbook," an original musical that won the London West End Musical of the Year Award in the late '70s.

With each invitation sent, the group enclosed a stamped envelope addressed to the Attic as a no-pressure suggestion that guests might want to contribute to the Attic's fund-raising drive. The friends coordinated and cooked potluck dishes for the April 27 buffet. Thirty guests came to dinner, and afterward the entire group attended "Coda," a play set during the '50s when Detroit jazz greats "cooked" music in little corner bars like the one where "Coda" takes place.

HOSTS AND hostesses for the "Theater Evening" provided cocktails and dinner. Guests bought their own tickets to the performance, and if they wished, made a contribution to the theater.

Out of curiosity, the group asked the Attic to keep a tally of total contributions received from those attending the first party. The Attic's Werba says the first party netted "just under \$500" — welcome contributions to the campaign that has raised a little over \$200,000 of the \$550,000 needed. Not only are contri-



Von H. Washington (left) and Booker Hinton appeared in the recent Attic Theatre production of "Songfest," opening Wednesday, June 6.

butions tax-exempt, but many corporations will match donations dollar for dollar or even double contributions their employees make to eligible organizations. The Attic qualifies as an arts and cultural organization, and the theater appreciates every dollar added to the fund.

The 14-year-old theater's financial woes began when the old building on Lafayette in Greektown, in downtown Detroit, burned in 1984. On a

week's notice the company moved to temporary summer quarters in the Fox Theatre and had to replace destroyed costumes and sets so it could resume the fun of "Strider."

In the fall, the Attic settled into its present New Center Pavilion location, in what was the auditorium for a nursing school. The building needed extensive renovation to work for

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JERRY ZOLYNSKI/staff photographer

Bob Loiko is Teyve in "Fiddler on the Roof," the annual outdoor musical presented by St. Dunstan's Guild of Cranbrook at the Greek Theatre in Bloomfield Hills. Show dates are Friday-Saturday, June 1-2, and Thursday-Saturday, June 7-9. For ticket information call 644-0527.

upcoming things to do

● LISTENER PARTY

Radio station WQRS will present its second Radio Listener party 7:30-7:50 p.m. Thursday, May 24, at the Troy Marriott Hotel. Listeners will have the opportunity to meet the WQRS staff, munch on hors d'oeuvres, listen to classical music provided by members of the Lyric Chamber Ensemble and drink whatever they prefer from the cash bar.

● READERS THEATER

Final performance of the Spring Series of Readers Theater will be

at 4 p.m. Sunday, June 3, in the DeRoy Theater at the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield. A complimentary wine bar will open at 5:15 p.m. The program will feature Joyce Fuerring, Henrietta Hermelin, Evelyn Orbach, Stacy Passon and Cecil Orman-Stone and will present works by Wendy Wasserstein, Nora Ephron and Ruth Whitman. Artistic Director Yolanda Fleischer will serve as host of the program. Tickets are available at the door beginning at 3

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12 noon - Brunch

2:00 pm - Show Time

\$10.00 per person - Show Only (\$13.00 preferred seating)

\$15.00 per person - Brunch & Show

Seniors - \$12.00 - Brunch & Show

\$19.00 Over 65 - \$12.00 - Brunch & Show with tickets

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