



Bob Weibel

Musical making good progress

The Plymouth Theatre Guild production of "Dooley's Deli" continues through Saturday at the Water Tower Theatre on the campus of Northville Regional Hospital. For ticket information call 420-2161.

By Bob Weibel
special writer

Plymouth Theatre Guild is closing its season with an ambitious undertaking — an original musical comedy entitled "Dooley's Deli."

Normally, new shows have a tryout period. Conceptual ideas are refined. Dialogue is revised. Music and lyrics change. "Dooley's Deli" as presented by PTG appears to be near the first-draft stage, with cast members in the process of finding their characters. It's what's called a work in progress.

The show was originally created as a master's degree project at Eastern Michigan University. Book and lyrics are by Plymouth's Mike Davis and Marc Holland, with music by Marc Malnero. Holland also occupies the director's chair and plays Dooley.

Much of the music is quite good, the orchestra under the baton of Aaron Larson is splendid. There are funny jokes. And clever word play. Some thought needs to be given, however, to smoothing out the rough edges of plot and character development.

THE STORY revolves around the sale of Dooley's Deli to a big conglomerate, which plans to replace it with a new office building. In retaliation, the resident film-fam man (Greg Lea, who certainly looks the part) pulls a scam on the representatives of the new owners. It's interesting but not enough to carry Act Two to a compelling finale. Perhaps a fight to save the deli in some device would provide more theatrical fireworks.

As is, "Dooley's Deli" depends on characters to move the story along. Either because of the script or casting, they prove an uneven lot. The best are in minor roles. Bobbie Judd captures the essence of a quirky Jewish widow. Co-author Mike Davis demonstrates exquisite comic timing as a bumbling executive. And Lisa Brandow sizzles as a loving but argumentative wife.

One wishes the three leads who work at the deli, Jeff Hammonds, Mike Hammonds and Nancy Keough, had taken more chances to develop equally distinctive characters. Though they do score musically, Hammonds and Keough are especially good with two ballads, "Destiny" and "Only Sincere Hearts" respectively. Hammonds has fun with a comedy number, "Drop Dead, Darling." Too bad their songs aren't more imaginatively staged — and the spotlight isn't used more subtly.

Still, "Dooley's Deli" has possibilities. The basic premise is sound. And the music works. PTG is to be commended for providing a venue for new work, and for staging a rare treat for theatergoers — a show in the developmental stage.

Bob Weibel of Westland is a freelance writer, who has spent more than 25 years in community theater as a director, designer and performer.

Ortez entertains like a pro

By Jill Hamilton
special writer

"Where else in Farmington Hills can you see a Mexican/Navajo Indian girl singing a French song for an international audience and an Irish mangle?" says Anita Ortez, the Mexican/Navajo girl in question. Where else indeed?

Ortez, who can sing in seven languages, performed an evening of song stylings for an enthusiastic audience at the Smith Theatre at Oakland Community College last weekend. The show was part of the Musica Viva International Concerts 1990 presented by the Smith Theatre, Michigan Duo Society for the Arts and the Friends of Musica Viva.

Ortez is a consummate performer, along the lines of show business legends like Frank Sinatra, Sammy

Davis Jr. and Dean Martin. Ortez — who looks a bit like singer Charo — performed a wide range of songs reflecting many cultures, sounds and moods. She moved easily from a Spanish tune about a bull who must die to a lovely old blues number, "Rock-A-Bye."

The stage was decorated in a circus theme — tiny puppets hung from the ceiling and the front of the stage was draped with clown costumes. The decor was a reminder of Ortez's show business background — at 6 she was performing as a trapeze artist in a circus.

Perhaps this is where Ortez got her ability to "work the crowd." She made sure her show was an audience participatory event. During one song, she had all of the women in the audience snapping their fingers to the music and during another, "Toreador," she had everyone

review

yelling "Ole!" throughout the song. The tireless performer was backed by an 11-member band which included a percussionist, violinists, a piano player and a cellist. The percussionist, John Blitti, and the drummer, Nick Bachus, were highlighted in a bongo heavy song, "Calypso Blues."

For one of the more elaborate numbers, "La Bamba" and "Crucifijo De Piedra," Ortez brought in two Spanish guitarists, two flower girls who walked down the aisles and tossed flowers to the audience, plus a young boy and girl — dressed in traditional Spanish attire — who performed a Spanish

dance. The young boy, in particular, looked like he wished he was elsewhere (preferably not wearing traditional Spanish costume), but the rest of the children looked like they were enjoying their part in the show.

And so did the audience. They seemed particularly enthralled with "Carousel," which picked up the carnival motif, and a medley of show tunes which had a little bit of everything, including snatches of a tune from "Fiddler on the Roof."

Ultimately, the show was an explosive addition to the series of international concerts.

upcoming things to do

• 'THE NERD'

Spring production of Eastern Michigan University's theater is Larry Shue's "The Nerd." This comic play will be performed in EMU's Sponberg Theatre on Friday-Sunday, June 8-10, and Thursday-Saturday, June 14-16. Curtain times are 8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday and 2:30 p.m. Sunday. For ticket information call the Quirk box office on campus in Ypsilanti at 487-1221.

• FREEDOM FESTIVAL

The Detroit-Windsor International Freedom Festival, celebrating peace and friendship between the United States and Canada, will open Friday, June 22, and continue through Wednesday, July 4. Opening ceremonies June 22 include a double parachute jump over the Detroit River,

delivering American and Canadian flags to their respective countries. In addition, there will be U.S. Air Force Flyers, awards to honored guests, and the annual Tug-Across-the-River competition between Detroit and Windsor tug teams. Daily events, targeted toward the entire family, attract nearly four million Americans and Canadians to the two cities hosting the festival.

• BLUEGRASS STRAWBERRIES

The second annual Ward's Orchards/E&W Productions Bluegrass and Strawberry Festival will be held Friday-Sunday, June 8-10, at the orchards site in Ypsilanti. A one, two or three-day pass includes free camping and free electric (as long as electric lasts). Featured artists include

the Lewis Family, Dana Cupp and the Detroit Bluegrass Band, the Doug Dillard Band, Old Joe Clark and Son Terry. Tickets are available at Ward's Orchards and all Ticketmaster outlets.

• STAR SEARCH

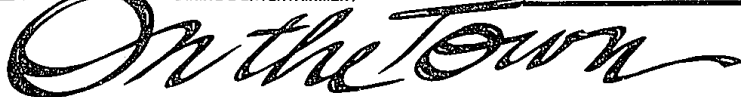
Paula Spaven of Plymouth out-sang seven competitors in the Novi Hilton's first Super Star Search challenge. Each vocalist used the new laser-karaoke machine that displays song lyrics on a video screen and is able to match the key of the singer's voice to that of the music instantaneously. By overwhelming audience applause, Spaven was declared the winner recently. A videotape of Spaven's performance is being sent to Ed McMahon's "Star Search" TV program as an audition for the show.

Additionally, Spaven received two roundtrip airline tickets to anywhere in the continental U.S.

• 'SHOW BOAT'

Michigan Opera Theatre has announced that veteran stage and film star Eddie Bracken will return to the Detroit stage, after a seven-year absence, as Cap'n Andy Hawkes, fervent captain of the Mississippi riverboat Cotton Blossom, in Jerome Kern's "Show Boat," opening Friday, Nov. 16, at the Fisher Theatre in Detroit. Ten performances are scheduled through Nov. 25. Subscription ticket orders to "Show Boat" and MOT's 1990-91 season are being taken by dialing the MOT Credit Card Hotline: 874-SING. Single tickets go on sale in late September.

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