

Timeliness adds to 'Radio Hour'

table talk

Best of show

Schoolcraft College of Livonia's Culinary Arts Salon Team received the best of show award for culinary schools at the recent Expo Gast '90 competition in Luxembourg and won gold medals in several individual competitions. Individual gold medals were Executive Chef Mary Brady and students Don Brago, Kim Larson and Shawn Loving. More than 1,000 international chefs competed in the World Cup event.

building is on a stretch of Michigan Avenue alongside the Hampton Inn. This is the sixth vintage in Mexican cuisine in metropolitan Detroit for Carlos Shaffran, president and chief executive officer of the restaurant chain. Shaffran has remodeled the old Waterworks Restaurant, formerly housed in the building.

Santa breakfasts

The Novi Hilton is repeating "Breakfasts with Santa" this holiday season in its Orchard Cafe. Seatings are at 9:30 and 11 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 8, 15 and 22. Santa and his friends will entertain and hear gift requests from kids. A breakfast buffet will be available. Cost is \$8.95 for adults, \$5.95 for children over 5 years and \$3.95 for children under 5 years. For reservations call 349-4000.

Don Carlos

A new Don Carlos Mexican Restaurant has opened in West Dearborn's historic "Waterworks" Building. Constructed by Henry Ford in 1913 and later transformed by him into a research center, the red brick

Performances of the Birmingham Village Players' production of "The 1940s Radio Hour" continue through Saturday. For ticket information call the box office at 644-2075.

By Cathie Breldenbach
special writer

The Birmingham Village Players offers a smorgasbord of great music from the '40s, visual gags and quirky characters in "The 1940s Radio Hour" — a behind-the-scenes look at a "live" broadcast Dec. 21, 1942, from the Algonquin Room of the New York City's Hotel Astor.

Five years ago, when the Attie Theatre produced "Radio Hour," the show played like a clever nostalgic piece that recreated the bygone era of World War II. In 1990, historical distance dissolves because the United States once again has lonely soldiers stationed far from home during the holidays. Current history adds a poignant depth to a delightful, light-hearted holiday show.

Director Isabel Himmelhoch superbly coordinated the non-stop locomotion of 14 cast and crew members and 12 musicians who crowd the stage. There's Johnny Cantone (Norm Colborne), the heart-throb who crooner and small-time roue who gets too drunk to continue the

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show. Cliff (Steve Tadevic), the overwrought producer, barks at performers struggling in minutes before showtime. Pops (Phil Whelan) belts the horses on the pay phone during the broadcast and lives out of a desk drawer. Wally (Tim Mintline) a delivery boy from the local deli, hangs around the set and yearns to break into show biz.

The fine cast includes Don Brown, Laura Haisch, Ken Ebaugh, John Picha, Debbie Goody, Roz Whitney, Greg Baker, and Cindy Pritchard as the irrepressible, gum-chomping Ginger who parks her chewed wad on top of the microphone every time she sings a number or does a commercial. That gross, pink, sticky hobb clinging to the microphone becomes a recurring sight gag rivaled only by the slapstick antics of Stanley (Sam



Cathie Breldenbach

Burke), the klutzy janitor and his stepladder.

THE BIRMINGHAM Village Players production of "Radio Hour" capitalizes on the visuals of Ginger's gum; Stanley's stepladder; silent, mimed panic over a fire in the control room; and the pleasure of seeing how one inventive man with a few ordinary gimmicks can create the sound effects of horses galloping and doors creaking or slamming shut.

Like stars in the "Grand Old Opry," "Radio Hour" performers also do commercials on the air for Pepsi, Corny Soap and Sal Hepatica laxative. From perky and humorous to downright earthy, the commercials are as much a part of the entertainment as the musical numbers.

And what musical numbers. "Radio Hour" rolls out a hit parade of songs from the era like "That Old Black Magic," "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy From Company B," "Chattanooga Choo-Choo," "I'll Never Smile Again" and "Blues in the Night." The orchestra led by Toots

The orchestra led by Toots Doubleman (Priscilla Benson) serves up fine musicianship with a 1940s beat.

Doubleman (Priscilla Benson) serves up fine musicianship with a 1940s beat. The cast, whether wisecracking about Sal Hepatica or singing timeless love songs like "I'll Be Seeing You," brings to life the way it was back in December 1942 when soldiers expected the war to be over within a year and listened to the "Radio Hour" broadcast to keep in touch with the state-side sounds of Christmas.

Cathie Breldenbach of West Bloomfield teaches college writing classes and works as a freelance writer.

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