

upcoming things to do

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Seedling in observance of the city's Earth Day Celebration

● ANNUAL AUCTION
The MSU Alumni Club of Oakland County is hosting its sixth annual auction which begins with a "Silent Auction" at 6 p.m. Saturday, April 27. In the main event Banquet Room at the Silverdome in Pontiac, the "Live Auction" begins at 8 p.m. Tickets at \$5 are available at the door.

● IN CONCERT
Roger Whittaker, Kenyan-born British entertainer, will appear Thursday-Sunday, May 25, at the Fox Theatre in Detroit. Tickets are on sale at the Fox Theatre box office, the Joe Louis and Cobo Arena box offices and all Ticketmaster outlets. Tickets range from \$37.50 down to \$10. To charge by phone call 645-6666. For further information call 567-6000.

● SPRING FESTIVAL
The St. Patrick Senior Center, Inc., Spring Festival will be held from 2-9 p.m. Sunday, April 28, at the senior center at 58 Parsons (behind Orchestra Hall) in Detroit. Admission is \$3 for adults, \$1 for children, at the door. For more information call 833-7080.

● MUSICAL COMEDY
Stagecrafters presents the musical comedy horror hit "Little Shop of Horrors," the final Main Stage production of the 1990-1991 season, at the Baldwin Theatre in downtown Royal Oak. Performances are at 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, April 26-27; Thursday-Saturday, May 2-4 and 9-11, and Friday-Saturday, May 17-18; 2 p.m. Sunday, April 28, May 12 and 19, and 7 p.m. Sunday, May 5. Tick-

ets at \$9 and \$10 may be reserved by calling 541-6430.

● TALENT SEARCH
Michigan Tastefest, a Memorial Day Weekend festival of food and entertainment, has announced the Tastefest Talent Search for Kids. The best performers will be chosen in age categories of 2-7 years, 8-13 years and 14-19 years, to compete in performances at the Michigan Tastefest. Birthdays must be as of April 30. Winners will be selected by a panel of celebrity judges and will receive prizes to be announced. Michigan Tastefest will be held May Thursday-Sunday, May 24-27, in Detroit's New Center Area. For more information on Talent Search for Kids' rules, call Mary Chris Thus at 872-0188.

● FOLK MUSIC
The Pessum Corner Traditional Music Association, a non-profit organization, presents John Gorka in concert at 8 p.m. Saturday, April 27, at St. Daniel Church Cushing Center in Clarkson. Tickets are \$8.50, adults; \$7.50, members, and \$6.50 for seniors and children under 15. Tickets are available at all Ticketmaster outlets, the Book Place in Lake Orion and at the door the night of the concert.

● HISPANIC HOLIDAY
Michigan's first statewide "5 de Mayo" Festival will be held from noon to 10 p.m. Sunday, May 5, at the Michigan State Fairgrounds in Detroit. Modern Mexican-American entertainment and traditional old-style entertainment from Mexico will be featured, with an all-day array of music, bands, dance troupes and mariachis. Admission is \$7 for adults and \$5 for senior citizens; 12 years and under are admitted free.

'Cats' will knock your socks off

Performances of the musical 'Cats' continue through tonight at the Palace of Auburn Hills. For ticket information call 377-8600.

Two years ago Richard Jay-Alxander (associate director for Cameron Mackintosh Inc.) was in town to premiere "Les Miserables" at the Fisher Theatre and to negotiate the return of "Cats" to Detroit.

He told me about the ultimate experience in musical theater—a multi-media megamusical in amplified rock style with video screen close-ups. It was the answer to the sometimes yearly waits for tickets to Mackintosh's Broadway wonders. This new concept was already in the works.

Tuesday evening, "Cats" opened at the Palace of Auburn Hills, reworked into this style of presentation. The cats wear mikes in their hair. The taped music is amplified rock-concert style to more than 4,000 people. Video broadcast solos on large video screen TVs with resolution so fine you can even see the stitches on Growl-tiger's variegated colored costume

and the cats' whiskers. T.S. Elliot's poetry is so clear you could sing along.

The Palace is blocked off to one side, its stage cleared by the size of the 21,000-seat building. From my seat on the Pistons' basketball floor, the videos bring to life the solos and give facial character to the cats. Higher up, binoculars might be more helpful.

PART ONE of the show is lifeless until Grizabella, Donna Lee Marshall, comes to sing "Memory." Then things change, and Part Two of the show lives up to its reputation. The dancing is modern, with outstandingly executed ballet maneuvers. The singers belt and use "legitimate" voices which soar with depth and power.

Christmas-tree-like lights line the set and the overhead spaces with booms and explosions from all parts of the oversized junkyard set. A make-believe train is made with a ragged umbrella, old lamps and a teakettle for Carmen Yurich's lively number as Slinkypaw. "Growl-tiger's Last Stand" spoofs musicals because Alice Lynn's voice is magical.



Mary Jane Doerr

Composer Andrew Lloyd Webber took the idea of "Cats" from T.S. Elliot's book "Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats," addressing the personalities of some 11 of Elliot's cats and adding a few of his own.

This production is now stylized with "canon" interpretations of Old Deuteronomy, Mistoflosses and Rum Tum Tugger. Alex Santoriello's Asparagus, called Gus, transcends the electrical personifications and the massive arena. The leanness of the sound heightens his tender song of the old cat's memories of past glories.

Webber weaves an element of spiritual goodness into "Cats" as he does into "Starlight Express" and his other musicals. Grizabella ascends to heaven knows where, amid the theater lights, upon a tire.

She has been chosen by Old Deuteronomy for a new life. And Daniel Marsaus's Old Deuteronomy teaches how to address cats with dignity and respect. There is richness in his powerful voice.

GUS, THE THEATRE CAT, tells us, "These modern productions are all very well, but there's nothing to equal, from what I hear tell, that moment of mystery when I made history."

It is right. The intimacy of theater experiences is lost in the vastness of the Palace but the magnitude of this "Cats" comes through loud and clear.

Mary Jane Doerr of Trop is a fulltime teacher and freelance writer who specializes in opera and musical theater.

Lively doings when yuppies meet ghost

Performances of the Jewish Ensemble Theatre production of "Cantorial" continue through Sunday, May 12, at the Aaron DeRosa Theatre at the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield. For tickets, call JET at 788-2900, visit any Ticketmaster outlet or call 645-6666.

As intoned by a mellow-voiced cantor, ancient Hebrew melodies have a haunting beauty. Taking this idea literally, playwright Ira Levin created "Cantorial" about a young couple who find that their new home, converted from a synagogue, is haunted by a long-dead cantor.

The Jewish Ensemble Theatre is currently presenting a lively, fine production of this engaging comedy. Lesley Rosen (Carol Lempert) and Warren Lives (Tim Pickering) are an interfaith yuppie pair who find their lives disrupted when each night at sunset the cantor's ghost begins to chant a steady program of liturgical music.

They consult the handiest Jew, Morris (Sol Frieder) the ancient deli owner across the street who used to worship at that synagogue. Gradually they delve into the history of the building and learn why this particular pesky cantor is trying to tell them to restore the place to its previous appearance.

Lesley, a non-observant Jew, finds the idea of converting her home back to a synagogue quite ludicrous, but gentle Warren becomes increasingly fascinated with the idea. As adopted child, he convinces himself that somewhere in his background his heritage must have been Jewish. As he works feverishly to restore the synagogue to its former beauty and makes it function again he also comes to re-examine his values.

LEMPERT IS a very likeable Lesley, and Pickering gives a very strong performance as Warren becomes more and more obsessed with his mission. Veteran character actor Frieder is a natural scene-stealer.



Barbara Michals

though He makes Morris a totaling winning conglomerate of sighs and groans, expressive gestures, sage advice, and adept comic timing.

Much of the easy-going comedy stems from the various ways the principals interact with the ghost. First the couple beg and plead, then Warren threatens to ransack the buildings to the Moslems. Morris tries reasoning with the ghost in Yiddish. Eventually they all treat the ghost as part of the family. Lesley and Morris grudgingly and Warren enthusiastically.

Among the supporting players, Carl Kusley is eminently WASPish as Warren's father, whom Lesley has

contacted to help bring Warren to his senses.

The rich, deep voice of the ghost is supplied by Cantor Harold Orbach of Temple Israel.

Volanda Fleischer's direction works well. Paul Jenke's set design begins with a garish retro '50s decor of neon pink and turquoise. Little wonder the cantor's ghost prefers the mahogany wood carvings that he fashioned himself.

Barbara Michals teaches high school English in Southfield. A theater critic for the last 16 years, she is an inveterate playgoer who regularly catches up on all the New York productions.

table talk

The Lark

West Bloomfield restaurant the Lark has received the AAA Four Diamond Award. The Lark joined 11 Michigan hotels being honored in 1991 for their commitment to quality and excellence. This is the first year that AAA has included restau-

rants a spart of its ratings. Joining the Lark in the Four Diamond winners circle is another newcomer to the award — the Radisson Plaza Hotel at Town Center in Southfield. Other local Four Diamond Award hotels include the Berkshire Hotel in Southfield and Townsend Hotel in Birmingham. Awards were presented at a recent luncheon at the Lark.

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