



Entertainment

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Stage-struck

Youngster breaks into show biz

By William Coultant
staff writer

Marvin Brennan probably won't be watching TV tonight.

While some of his friends play video games, watch their favorite sitcoms or play some one-on-one basketball, the 16-year-old will likely be taking dance lessons or acting lessons, or he might even be in front of a TV camera.

Brennan, a fourth grade student at Guardian Angel School in Birmingham, tried his hand at performing two and a half years ago and has been at it ever since.

"My sisters took a tap dancing class, and I went with them," Brennan said. "I watched what they were doing and practiced it myself."

That imitation of sisters Stacey, 16, and Bridgette, 14, brought out the young dancer's love of performing, and got him started. His mother Kathy said her son's abilities and interest soon took him beyond regular dance lessons, which led to private lessons.

Since then, Marvin has appeared on stage in musicals, plays and operas, on TV specials and commercials, and in industrial and commercial films. His most recent Detroit area appearance came on "Never Lose Hope," a Christmas special that featured Pistons star Isiah Thomas.

And despite those accomplish-

ments, Marvin is like any other boy who likes baseball and playing with friends.

"I got his (Thomas') autograph," he said. "He was nice."

ALTHOUGH HIS parts are sometimes small, Marvin has excelled in a variety of media, from Gilbert and Sullivan's "The Mikado," which played at the Fisher Theatre in December, to a principal part in the American Academy of Dance's Soviet Union Cultural Tour to commercial films and a part in a Walt Disney Movie, "Wild Hearts Can't Be Broken."

"Being ready for a variety of roles requires hours of training in dancing, acting and voice (Marvin has twice won national dance competitions). And even then, a director might want some one with "a different look."

"They want (the performer) to be good at everything," said Kathy Brennan. "You never know. They may want some singing or dancing in a role. So you've got to be prepared."

So far, Marvin has not been too disappointed with being passed up for parts. He's certainly had his share of roles in his brief career.

And friends don't have a problem with his celebrity status either. "They think it's pretty neat," he said. "They didn't know I could do that work."

Sue Martin, of the Talent Shop in Birmingham, said with few companies that direct their message to audiences with children, such as those that produce toy or baby products, opportunities for young actors are limited. Marvin's good work ethic and professional attitude have helped him get parts.

"Marvin is a very skilled young man," she said. "He has professional experience and he wants to do this. They either want to or they don't. He really does a good job."

Already, in his brief career, Marvin has traveled to Poland, Russia, Denmark and Sweden, and has auditioned for shows in New York, North Carolina and, most recently, San Francisco.

That travel has a price. Marvin has to make up school work, and if he's on the road, he has to work with a tutor. After a recent trip to San Francisco for an audition, the young thespian returned only to have to cram for seven exams.

"It's a lot of fun, but a lot of work," Kathy Brennan said. "I told him 'If you want to do this, you have to do your school work.' We don't want to push."

Marvin may be missing out on some things, but he doesn't seem to mind. After all, he might just end up on the other side of the TV screen his friends are watching.



Marvin Brennan is at home on stage. The Birmingham resident was in costume for the Detroit production of "The Mikado" at the Fisher Theatre in December.

American Artists Series sheds light on obscure works

The American Artists Series, which has had a dedicated core of followers during its more than 20 years of existence, is distinguished by its unusual repertoire.

Joann Freeman, pianist and musical director of the series, seems to have an inexhaustible ability to dig through libraries and archives and come up with new musical treasures that seldom, if ever, see the light of day.

The latest program of this series, given Jan. 12, marked a certain departure: from this approach. While some non-standard material will still be presented on future programs, it will be intermingled with established selections from the standard repertoire.

Starting with the recent program, the selections on all events have been changed to reflect the new trend.

THE LATEST program opened with Mozart's Quartet in F major for Oboe and Strings. It concluded with the Piano Trio in C major by Brahms. In between were two less familiar works that were in the original schedule — a Larghetto and Hu-

moreke by John Knowles Paine (1839-1906) and a quartet for Oboe and Strings by Malcolm Arnold (b. 1921).

The regular contingent of DSO musicians consisted of violinists Linda Snedden-Smith and Ronald Flashitz, violist Hart Hoffman, cellist John Thurman and oboist Donald Baker.

Such change in format is, in my opinion, a step in the right direction. In his introductory notes to the Mozart Oboe quartet, Baker elicited chuckles from the audience when he remarked that the Mozart masterpiece was of a much higher quality than the obscure work by Crussell originally scheduled.

THIS, IN ITSELF, may not be a great revelation to most of us — few would seriously dispute the superiority of the established master. This, however, does "make" the less established works obsolete.

Unknown works with reasonable qualifications may be analogous, if not outright equivalent, to a voyage into foreign lands. Such a voyage can be enjoyable provided one doesn't remain stranded. The established repertoire serves as a secure home-



Avigdor Zoromp

The next program, on March 8, will feature works by Mozart (Flute Quartet), Amy Beach, Villa-Lobos and Mendelssohn (C minor Trio).

base of return from such a journey. Possibly a less desirable side effect is that programming obscure works side by side with the more established masterpieces tends to put the former at a distinct disadvantage.

THIS WAS the case, for example, with Paine's work for the same instrumental combination as the

Among the factors that made this chiasm even more pronounced was the fact that the performance of the Brahms Trio was among the better, more inspired live performances of this work that I have heard — complete with a sense of perspective and subtle nuances.

The energy flowed from the music itself, rather than from brute force. The latter was more apparent in the Paine work. One had to strain to find something humorous in the Humoreske.

THE Oboe Quartet by Arnold fared better.

With its style and period so far removed from Mozart, it avoided the futile prospect of a direct comparison. Its English idyllic style provided this program with a dimension that was not duplicated in the other works. It also benefited from Baker's ability to make almost any work for oboe sound like a masterpiece.

There was some concern on the

part of the organizers that the Detroit Lions game, which took place that day, would reduce attendance. Kingswood Auditorium turned out to be more full than ever. This may have been one significant albeit indirect contribution to the advancement of the arts by a most-inspired invention — the VCR.

THE NEXT program, on March 8 will feature works by Mozart (Flute Quartet), Amy Beach, Villa-Lobos and Mendelssohn (C minor Trio).

Beach has been put on the map recently by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and its director, Neeme Jarvi, who recorded her Gaelic Symphony. Her work on this program will be Theme and Variations for Flute and String Quartet.

Avigdor Zoromp, born in Poland, educated in Israel and the United States, has a Ph.D. in math and has studied piano, music theory and history.

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If you have questions or need information on auditions for other talent categories, call Walt Disney World Audition Information at 407/345-5701, Monday through Friday, 10am-4pm EST.

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