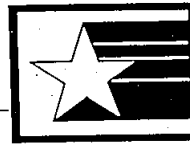


# Entertainment

Keely Wygonik editor/953-2105



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Thursday, January 30, 1992 11A

## Avon Players Actors, scenes work in 'Broadway Bound'

Performances of the Avon Players production of "Broadway Bound" continue through Feb. 8 at the playhouse on Tienken Road at Rungton Road in Rochester Hills. For ticket information call the box office at 373-1339.

Neil Simon's life of luck and heartache unfolds in an authentic 1949 time machine as Avon Players presents the last of an autobiographical trilogy, "Broadway Bound." The highly stylized production depicts the simple days as being complicated, and director Jon Katz demonstrates to the last detail that times don't change.

**THE CHARACTERS** in Simon's play are based on those closest to him in real life, and this is the reason they are well-rounded and believable. The cornerstone of this production is Debbie Weitzell as Kate Jerome, the mother of two men/boys about to embark on their own. Weitzell's acting is credible and enhances Simon's finest writing, and she remains true to life at all times.

Her character, Kate, faces not only the loss of her boys to a successful writing career, but she also faces impending divorce. Weitzell produces a confused and heart-wrenching Kate, delivering lines with realism to her cheating stage husband such as, "How is it possible I could hate



**Sally Dubats**

you so much after loving you all my life?"

Eugene Jerome (the "Young Neil Simon" part) is acted by Matthew Pagnani. Eugene sees humor in all of family life, although the family doesn't see humor in anything, and he uses these family lessons as grist for the writing mill. Pagnani plays Eugene with a very likable 1949 spunk and lots of energy.

Eugene's brother and writing partner is Stanley Jerome performed by Jay Hobauser. Stanley carries the business and management end of the young writing team.

The scenes between Pagnani and Hobauser work well and are believable. As brothers, they perform a gamut of emotions from friendly buddies to angry men in the midst of family conflict. Hobauser's comedy timing is much appreciated while playing, "Oh, God, give me an idea for a sketch that you're not using!"

**ALSO PART** of the family is funny Bill MacNeill as Ben Epstein, the Socialist grandfather who lives with



Bill MacNeill (left) and Debbie Weitzell of Rochester Hills, and Dianne Blernat of Troy in a scene from the Avon Players production of "Broadway Bound."

the Jeromes. MacNeill is right on the money in his witty performance. The character calls for a grandfather who is gruff and cannot show affection, and MacNeill's effective style hints at a lovable man (when he's not being a Socialist).

Stirring up trouble in the house in Jack Jerome, the cheating husband,

performed with excellence by Fred Shulak. Shulak offers a serious and frightened man that, despite ruining a family, the audience can pity.

Rounding out the cast is Dianne Blernat as Blanche. Kate's rich sister. Blanche defines the family struggle to stay in one piece, and Blernat pulls those pieces together well with sound acting abilities.

The solid and practical set by Gerry D'Ambrusio handles terrifically the two-story requirements of the play, and it is 1949 detail-dressed to the tea by Annie Williams.

Hats off to director Jon Katz for smooth blocking, scenes which have a spring-board effect for fast pace and relationships that are represent-

ative of true-life in this Avon Players comedy/drama production.

Sally Dubats of Southfield is an actress, director and teacher, who teaches at community theaters in the metropolitan area. She is artistic director of West End Productions headquartered in Southfield.

## Young violinist shines but symphony performance falls short

The Birmingham-Bloomfield Symphony Orchestra is among the elite of community orchestras. In some past events, it has tackled some formidable and complex works with impressive results.

Thursday, Jan. 23, the BBSO featured some lighter selections, with Charles Greenwell conducting. Greenwell, who is the music director at WQRS and has a long broadcasting career, enlivened the event with his imaginative anecdotes.

The event took place at the Handman Hall of Temple Beth El in Birmingham, where people were seated around tables with light snacks.

The program under that format, while not featuring heavy weight material, consisted nevertheless of attractive shorter selections by the classical masters. The composers represented consisted of Tchaikovsky, Copland, Smetana, Weber, Bern-

stein, Massenet and Johann Strauss Jr.

**THE ONE** element that fell short in this event was the quality of the performance.

This observation is made without any unrealistic expectations. It is readily granted that even a good community orchestra cannot expect to match the level of a professional orchestra such as the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

But one does expect a certain standard of intonation and dynamic variety from a community orchestra, especially one of the caliber and track record of the BBSO.

On this occasion, the orchestra sounded frequently like a Suzuki class for beginners. There may have been some reasons behind this, such as lack of sufficient rehearsal time. Also, the more capable members of the group are reportedly engaged



**Avigdor Zaromp**

*Among the better-performed selections were some segments by Bernstein with dances from "On the Town" and from his musical "Fancy Free." Another item with better results was a suite from Le Cid by Massenet.*

only in the more serious events. If this is the case, it is a wrong-

headed approach. While the shorter and popular selections may require a

shorter attention span than a Mahler symphony, for example, they are ill served by performers who consistently play wrong notes and are out of tune.

It is easy to blame problems on cuts in artistic support by the Engler administration and I am among the many who criticize the state government on that issue. But in this state we are still allowed to have rehearsals without a governor's approval, and the BBSO has little excuse for its failure to exercise that option.

**THERE WERE** some "points of light" in this event, even though their number didn't approach a thousand. The brightest of them was young violinist Gabriel Bolnosky, who performed the challenging final movement from Tchaikovsky's concerto.

His mature approach to phrasing,

rhythmic variation and dynamics were indicative of a most talented growing artist. His few intonation slips may be excused — even Perlman couldn't have produced a consistently perfect tone with such poor accompaniment.

Among the better performed selections were some segments by Bernstein with dances from "On the Town" and from his musical "Fancy Free." Another item with better results was a suite from Le Cid by Massenet.

These selections were reflective of some of this orchestra's higher capabilities. With some more work and effort, this standard could have been extended to the rest of the program.

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

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