

# Radio tale

Cast charms audience in  
'The Voice of the Prairie'

Performances of the Theatre Guild production of "Voice of the Prairie," a nostalgic comedy by John Olive, continue through May 9 at the Theatre Guild playhouse, 15138 Beech Daily, one block south of Five Mile in Redford. Tickets, \$7, for information call the box office at 538-5678.



Bob Weibel

**T**HE THEATRE GUILD's "The Voice of the Prairie" is part sentimental journey, history lesson, comic farce, and poignant story of innocence lost. And it's completely charming from beginning to end.

Playwright John Olive uses flashbacks, time shifts and a variety of locales to intertwine a tale of early radio with the personal lives of those who made it popular.

Director, Gail Susan Mack, does a fine job of staging a piece that is perhaps as much cinematic as it is theatrical, not an easy task.

The play spans an era from 1890 to the 1920s. Two sets of actors play the principal performers at different ages, as the play shifts back and forth in time.

ONE CONSTANT throughout is an opportunistic entrepreneur, played by John Eastman. His comedy is a bit broad at times, but Eastman is consistently funny as a sometimes wimpy, always film-funny, one-man traveling broadcaster.

He goes from town to town about

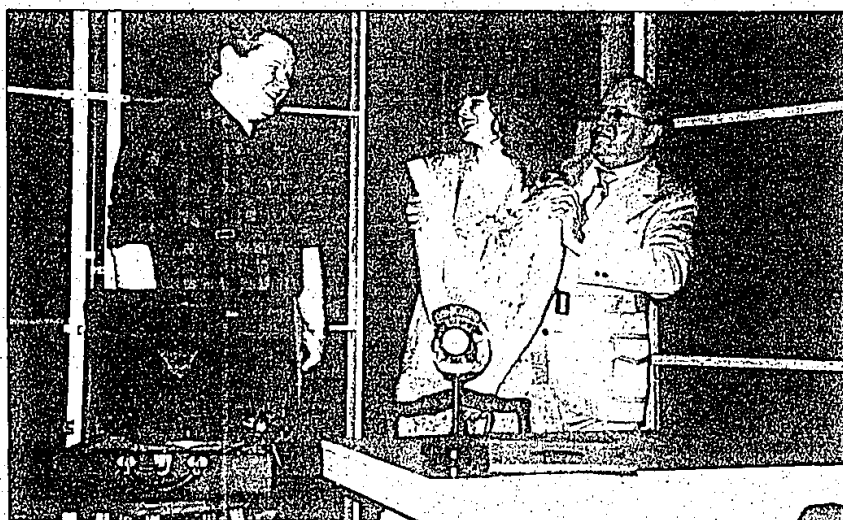
one step ahead of the law) setting up his transformer and putting local talent on the air. He sells radios to farmers with the slogan, "The magic of the ether is the wave of the future."

One day he coerces a local farm hand (Henry Bennett) in front of the microphone. Bennett could be a bit more folksy, but is convincing as a farmer with a natural talent for telling stories from the heart, mostly about his boyhood adventures with a blind girl.

Well, our "voice" of the prairie is soon a hit. Our con man, of course, underpays him, "Prairie's big, farms few, fifty cents the best I can do."

Time shifts to an earlier time. We meet our yarn-spinner as a boy (Chris Berzack), and the blind girl (Alicia Bowerly) who inspired the stories.

ALICIA AND Chris are Creative and Performing Arts students at Churchill High School in Livonia. She is superb as a spunky, adventurous, young girl who isn't about to let blindness be a handicap. He creates a sympathetic character who bounced about with his hobo Irish fa-



David Quinn (Henry Bennett) (left), an admiring fan, Susie (Jessica Pritchard), and Leon Schwab (John Eastman) in a scene from the Theatre Guild's "The Voice of the Prairie."

ther, and picked up his gift for telling stories.

She plays the father, a jilted, watermelon man, minister, newspaper vendor, farmer, and perhaps a backstage voice or two. He's terrific, talented, versatile, and fills

the stage with energy and enthusiasm.

Time shifts forward, and the blind girl (now played by Mary Vinette) is a successful teacher. Vinette captures the essence of an adult coping without vision in the sighted world.

She and the "voice" meet again, and in the Paul Harvey tradition of "Now You Know the Rest of The Story," we learn that David Sarnoff, from NBC in New York, wants to make him a nationwide star.

Also appearing from CAPA are

Jessica Pritchard, Sheila Yert and Patrick O'Reilly.

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

## table talk

### Golden Mushroom

Meet the 1992 Michigan Culinary Team at a special dinner at The Golden Mushroom, 18100 West 10 Mile, Southfield, 6 p.m. Sunday, April 26. Cost \$75 per person. On Cloverleaf market presents a LaTite Rothschild Wine Dinner at the Golden Mushroom, 7 p.m. Monday, May 11. Cost \$95 per person. For information, reservations, call 559-4230.

### Buddy's Pizza

Benefit for the Capuchin Community Center Soup Kitchen in Detroit, 1 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday, April 27, all-you-can-eat pizza and salad, adults \$8, seniors \$7, children under 12, at all dine-in locations including Farmington Hills and Livonia. For information, call 579-0712.

### Lucille's

Lucille's, 43711 Michigan, Canton is hosting a special fund-raise money for Detroit Children's Hospital. Participants are collecting pledges for the 24 mile horseback ride, 11 a.m. Sunday, April 26. For information, call 397-1988.

### Cafe Cortina

Cafe Cortina, 30715 W. Ten Mile Road, Farmington Hills, presents "Saluting the Foods and Music of Italy," 7 p.m. Wednesday, April 29, six-course dinner and Prosecco featuring music from "Festival de San Remo" by Pino Marulli and Lisa Agazzi. Cost \$42 per person. Call 474-3033 for reservations.

### Urban Cowboy

The Libertines featuring Cindy Stone perform Wednesdays at Steffy's Lounge in Westland, 746-9264 and Thursdays through May 16 at Urban Cowboy in Canton, 729-8980.

### Punchinello's

Punchinello's, near the Birmingham Theatre in Birmingham is celebrating its 10th anniversary. Fine food, cabaret shows downstairs 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday nights for \$15 per person. Friday nights include jazz to go with free hors d'oeuvres. New coffee and vodka bar. Call 644-5277 for information/reservations.

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### Machus Sly Fox

Machus Sly Fox presents murder mystery dinner theater, 7 p.m. Saturday, May 16. Cost \$99 per couple includes wine, appetizer, salad, dinner entree, non-alcoholic beverages, dessert, tax, gratuity. For reservations, call 642-6900.

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