

Nine-year-old steals the show in well-cast 'Annie'

Performances of the Jewish Community Center and Nancy Gurwin production of "Annie" continue through Sept. 26 at the Aaron DeRoy Theatre at the JCC in West Bloomfield. For ticket information call the JCC at 681-1000 or Gurwin at 354-0545.

A 9-year-old Star Search winner told me recently her ambition was to play "Annie". Of course. The musical about "Little Orphan Annie" is the ultimate chance for a young ingenue to strut her stuff, and show her capabilities. Laura Buono opened Saturday evening as "Annie" in a well cast,

tightly paced Nancy Gurwin production at the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield.

But she does not need to cavalcade her talents for the audience. She is the little girl from Rochester who was cast into the roles of the young Cassette and Eugene in the Detroit and Chicago runs of "Les Miserables". As Annie, another rags to riches role, she is a natural stage personality.

She is a child, if you can think of an accomplished performer already a member of Actor's Equity Association as a child, "fully dressed with a smile," with twinkling dark eyes, and appeal that keeps the attention focused on her.

Her voice in the show's two hits "Maybe" and "Tomorrow" has resonance in the middle and lower

ranges particularly, and more than enough power to belt the upper ranges.

Charles Strouse's 1977 musical about the comic strip character takes place in New York in 1933 when the city was more like a small town. Annie has been abandoned to the orphanage by her parents. While sociologists argue whether environment or heredity have the greater influence on a child's personality, Annie is proof that heredity is the victor over an environment that has played the greater force in shaping the personalities of the other orphans.

A well rehearsed group of six children Dana Steingold, Lydia Ra-

burn, Stephanie Iinger, Andrea Bogas, Lena Cardwell, and Molly Linden play the angry, hitting, fighting "little girls," a group from which Annie emerges with enough poise to take on the nation's highest official, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (charmingly performed by either Sam Jungerman or Edgar A. Guest III).

Caretaker Miss Hannigan has to get some of the credit. With pretty Tracy Plaster, who does, Plaster is more of a burlesque dancer than Carol Burnett or Joanne Worley as Hannigan, but she has a primal scream that can scare even the most hardened orphan. Her "Little Girls" solo makes a case more for

Hannigan than beaten down little orphans.

James Cagney-like Greg Olaszewski took the difficult role of the billionaire Oliver Warbucks. Delivering lines like "The president will have to tell you, Annie" (about her parent's deaths) believably takes a pro.

Director choreographer Kathi Bush had lots of talent to make the caricature scenes of WEAF "Hour of Smile" radio program and Roosevelt's cabinet meeting the most amusing of the evening.

The set, a black backdrop with silver taped spread to form a cityscape of New York, was easily rearranged into Warbucks' home, the

orphanage, and the Hooverville dinner scenes, bringing the show in at a quick 2 1/2 hours.

Priscilla Benson kept up the pace at the piano with the sometimes foggy-like accompaniment backed up by Larry Grodsky on drums, and Robert Jed on bass.

As Warbucks, Greg Olaszewski is devoid of any bachelor oddities, but Annie might have considered the Munchies as parents. With the delightful Rhonda Furman and Ron Dehl as Lily and Rooster, life would be interesting.

Mary Jane Duerr of Troy is a full-time teacher and freelance writer who specializes in opera and musical theatre.

Singer-songwriter likes small audience

By KERRY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER

Singer-songwriter Mike Krieger, 31, has been on the road since April, performing in living rooms, churches and small cafes. At 8 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 19, he'll bring his music to the Birmingham Unitarian Church at 651 Woodward, just north of Lone Pine Road. Tickets are \$8.50 adults, \$5 students and seniors. Call 788-2389 for information and reservations.

He'll also be performing at Punchinello's, 184 Pierce, Birmingham, 7-10 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 23, Oct. 14, 21, 28 and Nov. 4.

"It's been a wonderful experience," said the Southfield native who's traveled 7,000 miles and given 50 concerts since he launched his Living Room Tour on April 19.

"I've played for anywhere from six to 450 people at each concert," he said. It wasn't always this way. Krieger moved to Los Angeles in the early 1980s to get a recording contract, but things didn't work out as he had hoped. In March of 1986 he joined the Great Peace and walked across the country promoting nuclear disarmament.

During this walk, Krieger and other musicians formed "Collective Vision," playing several shows with such folk-rock legends as Pete Seeger, Peter Yarrow, Holly Near and Graham Nash, culminating with a concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial before more than 20,000 people.

He continued performing, but grew increasingly disenchanted with the L.A. music scene. "My songwriting is about expressing feelings," said Krieger who com-



Local talent: Singer-songwriter Michael Krieger will present a concert at the Birmingham Unitarian Church on Sept. 19.

lines a strong pop/folk vocal style with introspective lyrics.

"When you're performing in a club or larger venue, it's hard for people to hear the lyrics. If they can't hear, they aren't experiencing the music. In a living room, you can't avoid a connection."

As a songwriter, Krieger said he is motivated by such basic human emotions as love, loss, joy and sorrow, as well as by environmental and peace issues.

In his song "Beautiful Planet" he sings "I've got a beautiful planet, and I've got a good heart. We're gonna save this beautiful planet. I'm gonna do my part."

The Paint Creek Folklore Society also has a Comedy Concert Series. It opens 7 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 20, in the Rochester Hills home of Phil and Althea Duolittle. For information, call 375-2513.

Cranbrook Music Guild opens season with pianist

British pianist David Norris, first-ever recipient of the prestigious Gilmore Artist award will open the Cranbrook Music Guild's 41st season, 8 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 27 in the library of the Cranbrook House, (Lone Pine and Cranbrook Roads).

Tickets are \$15 each and may be purchased at the door or ordered by mail from CMG, P.O. Box 492, Bloomfield Hills, Mich. 48303.

Shuttle bus service is provided from the Christ Church Cranbrook parking lot.

An artist reception will follow the concert. For information, call 751-2435.

The Nov. 24 concert will feature the Larson-Albin duo, harp & flute. Detroit Symphony Orchestra's Brass Quintet performs Dec. 15, Bradley Lechman, harpsichord, March 16 and Ying String Quartet on Feb. 16.

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