

ON THE MARQUEE

"Mr. Scrooge"

Southfield Community Theatre presents "Mr. Scrooge," 3 p.m. Dec. 6 and 12 and 7 p.m. Dec. 5, 6 and 12 in Room 115 of the Parks and Recreation Building, Southfield Civic Center, 26000 Evergreen. Tickets \$5 adults, \$3 students and seniors. Available at the door, or call 354-4717.

Garden Series Concert

Bel Canto Choral Society will be performing as part of the Southfield Cultural Arts "Concerts in the Garden Series" Sunday, Dec. 6 at the Prudential Town Center Atrium beginning with a 10:30 a.m. continental breakfast, followed by concert at 11 a.m. Cost for breakfast and concert is \$7.50, coffee and concert only, \$4. For reservations, call 354-4717.

Historical drama

Reviews for Betty Neustat's historical drama "The Queen's Physician," presented by the Jewish Ensemble Theatre, continue through Dec. 6 in the Aaron D'Arty Theatre at the Jewish Community Center, 6500 W. Maple, West Bloomfield. Regular performances Dec. 6 through Dec. 27. For tickets, call 645-6666. For information, call 788-2900.

American Artists

American Artists Series opens 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 6 with a concert featuring the American Artists Series Chamber Players, and charnelist Theodore Olen, at the Kingswood Auditorium, 500 Lone Pine Road in Bloomfield Hills. For information, call 851-5044. Preview lecture begins at 2 p.m. tickets \$12.50, students, \$7.50.

Farmington Band

Enjoy a variety of festive, seasonal music at the Farmington Community Band's annual holiday concert, 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 6 at Harrison High School on Twelve Mile Road between Middlebelt and Orchard Lake Road in Farmington Hills. For information call 476-8014 or 489-3412.

Cranbrook Music Guild

Cranbrook Music Guild presents the Detroit Symphony Brass Quintet 8 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 15 in the Library at Cranbrook House on Lone Pine Road in West Bloomfield. Call 751-2435 for tickets.

Chamber Choral

Cantata presents a cappella performance of carols and Songs of Christmas 8 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 12 at Episcopal Church of the Advent on Middlebelt, ¼ mile north of Long Lake Road in Orchard Lake. The 20 voice ensemble specializes in unaccompanied choral music from the 15th to the 20th century. Tickets \$8. For information, call 642-2536.

'Christmas Carol' is a joy to watch

Get reacquainted with Dickens' classic "A Christmas Carol," now playing at the Meadow Brook Theatre. Stage wizardry enhances fine performances of an exuberant cast.



The Meadow Brook Theatre production of "A Christmas Carol" continues through Jan. 3 at the theatre on the campus of Oakland University in Rochester Hills. For ticket information, call 377-3300.

By HUGH GALLAGHER

It's a tradition. The Meadow Brook Theatre production of "A Christmas Carol" has become as much a part of the metro Detroit Christmas scene as the Thanksgiving Day Parade.

Veteran actor Booth Coleman returns for his 11th year as Ebenezer Scrooge, that heartless embodiment of raw capitalism gone berserk. Coleman's performance is the rich jewel in the middle of a lavish and brilliant setting.

Charles Nolte's adaptation has all the magic, charm and vigor to faithfully capture Dickens' great story in the small frame of the Meadow Brook stage. We journey with the ghosts through time and space, believing

every minute that we are with Scrooge through all his Christmases — past, present and yet to come.

Nolte's staging has some fine special effects even for our special effects satiated times.

Peter Hicks set is a marvel of efficiency. A training center moves us inside and outside a beautifully detailed Victorian business district in chilly December. Other small side sets suggest a variety of well defined locations.

And all of this stage wizardry is only to enhance the fine performances of an exuberant cast.

At the heart is Coleman, at first a very wounded heart. Coleman's Scrooge is not a ranter, but rather a grumbler, a snapper, a man too mean for hysterics. Watching Coleman rifle through a pile of money with his back hunched and his breathing slightly constricted is to see Scrooge as Dickens must have seen him.

Coleman's Scrooge changes slowly as each ghost reminds him of his humanity. His final delight in reclaiming his heart is the joy to watch, all light glows and feather-like steps.

Coleman is well supported by a uniformly fine cast. Paul Hopper's Peter Cratchit is as warm and outgoing as his boss is cold, and Hopper's joy over simple pleasures is contagious.

Joseph Reed's robust Christmas Present has a godlike presence. Like



Christmas tale: Kenneth Joseph Gauci (Tiny Tim) and Paul Hopper (Bob Cratchit) star in the Meadow Brook Theatre's production of "A Christmas Carol," through Jan. 3.

wise, Adrienne Kriewall's ethereal Christmas Past seems to glide across the stage and her precisely spoken admonitions seem just right.

Also notable are Mary Benson's righteous Mrs. Cratchit, Richard Schrodt's jovial Fred, Phillip Locker's

giddy Mr. Fezziwig and Maurynn McDevitt's sweet Belle.

This is a fine way to introduce children to live theater with its familiar story and all stops out effects. It's also a good way to reacquaint yourself with Dickens' wonderful classic.

St. Bede Players present 'The Messiah'



CATHIE BREIDENBACH

times.

The Playes decided to make their performances of "The Messiah" not only musical celebrations of the season, but literally a chance for people to "feed the flocks," by donating food for the hungry and homeless as the admission price to the concert.

At 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 12, and Sunday, Dec. 13, the St. Bede Players will present the Christmas selections of Handel's "Messiah" in St. Bede's Catholic Church on Southfield Road at 12 Mile. The admission price will

be three items of non-perishable food or \$3.

"The church is constantly getting calls or having people knock on the door asking for food," said Pat Kimberly, program co-producer. "We keep hearing it over and over. It's been a bad year."

St. Bede's will distribute food donated to those in need throughout the metropolitan Detroit area. The church also hopes to build a stockpile of canned goods and boxes of non-perishable food to meet daily requests.

For the past 27 years, the St. Bede Players have sung under the direction of Joseph Gamache of Southfield, and this is the first time they've done "The Messiah," Kimberly said.

"I've wanted to have at least 50 singers to do it," she said. This year, on the 250th anniversary of "The Messiah," which was first sung in a church in Dublin, Ireland, Gamache decided the group had waited long enough to perform one of the most uplifting and challenging choral pieces

of all time.

With 34 strong voices, and 20 musicians in the orchestra, "we sound like 100," said Kimberly. This year the modern Southfield church with the soaring roof line will be filled with Handel's powerful music.

Featured performers include Jacqueline Enous, lead soprano; Mary Sullivan, soprano; Ruth Ann Zaroff, alto; Marianne Bloomfield, alto; David Reynolds, tenor, and John Ratech, bass.

After "The Messiah," Gamache will invite the audience to sing a few Christmas carols, and then to join the St. Bede Players in a repeat of the exhilarating "All Hail Gloria," a personal favorite. After the performance, the musicians and singers will invite the audience to Christmas cookie refreshments at an afterglow reception.

The St. Bede Players began as part of the church, and now the group is under the umbrella of the Southfield Department of Parks and Recreation. Every season The Players put on two

productions, one in December, and one in the spring.

This May they'll do Victor Herbert's light opera, "Naughty Marietta," a departure from their frequent choice of the witty, tongue-twisting lyrics and challenging music of Gilbert and Sullivan.

Members come from all over the tri-county area to perform with the group that encourages music through fellowship and song. They travel from as far as Mount Clemens, Ann Arbor, Lansing, Canton, Dearborn and Downriver.

All singers and musicians volunteer their time. "Some are professional, but they play and sing free because they enjoy the group so much. Joe encourages pulling together and caring," said Kimberly who has been with The St. Bede Players for 27 years, and describes singing with the group as "a beautiful experience."

Cathie Breidenbach of West Bloomfield teaches college writing classes and works as a freelance writer.

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