

ON THE MARQUEE

Southfield Syphony

Southfield Symphony Orchestra will present a concert 3 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 7 at Congregation Shaarey Zedek in Southfield. Guest soprano Linda Thorne will perform "The Four Last Songs" of Richard Strauss. She will be the featured soloist in Mozart's "Solemn Vespers" when the orchestra combines with the Ford Motor Chorus. For tickets, call 354-4717 or 851-7408.

Cabaret concert

The Julius Charles Music Fund Concert Series and Jewish Community Center of Metropolitan Detroit will present a cabaret concert starring Alexander Zanjic and friends, with special guest harpist Jane Rosenson, 8:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 6 the Jewish Community Center, 6600 W. Maple Road, West Bloomfield. Refreshments will be served; tickets \$16; call 661-1000, Ext. 342.

Family luncheon

The Jewish Community Center with Tedd E. Bear Productions is offering a family luncheon featuring a performance of "Beauty & The Beast" Feb. 7, 14, 21, and 28 at the center in West Bloomfield. The cost is \$12.50 per person. For information, call 661-1000, Ext. 335.

Musical auditions

Open auditions for singers, dancers and actors for "A Little Night Music," to be presented by the Jewish Community Center with Nancy Gurwin Productions beginning March 20, will be held 7 p.m. Monday, Feb. 7 at the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield. For information and audition application, call Nancy Gurwin 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 364-0545 or 352-2797.

Livonia Symphony

The Livonia Symphony Orchestra will present a concert featuring the music of Tchaikovsky, Wagner, Liszt, Orlandini and Gould, 8 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 6 in the James P. Carli Auditorium at Churchill High School, 8900 Newburgh, Livonia. Call 468-6575 for ticket information.

Children's tale

An Arbor Goodtime Players will perform an updated, humorous version of "Cinderella" at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 9 at the Maplewood Community Center in Garden City. Cost \$4 per person includes brownies and drinks. Tickets must be purchased in advance; call 525-8846.

Meadow Brook

Neil Simon's comedy "Plaza Suite" opens 8 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 11 for a four-week run at the Meadow Brook Theatre on the campus of Oakland University in Rochester Hills. For times and tickets, call 377-3300, or Ticketmaster, 645-6666.

Talented cast in 'The Price'

Performances of the Birmingham Village Players production of "The Price" continue through Feb. 5 at the playhouse in Birmingham. For ticket information call the box office at 644-2075 anytime.

THEATER REVIEW



VICTORIA DIAZ

Now in their 70th theater season, the Birmingham Village Players are currently performing Arthur Miller's thought-provoking drama, "The Price." Often regarded as a kind of sequel to Miller's "After the Fall," the play is about two alienated brothers who meet after a 10-year separation and go over memories of their parents and their childhood. While the Players' production does falter occasionally, overall, it is worthwhile.

Directed here by Sid Britton, the two-act play is set in 1968 in a Manhattan brownstone elite, amid the detritus of family furniture which must be sold before the old building is torn down. Vic, a police officer, and his wife, Esther, await the arrival of a dealer who, they hope, will make an acceptable offer for the material left-overs of Vic's childhood. Soon, the dealer arrives and, eventually, Vic's

affluent brother, Walter, makes his appearance.

Tom D'Agostino turns in an engaging performance as the middle-aged, duty-bound Vic, who has paid a high price in order to obtain the right thing. Onstage throughout this sometimes-talky play, the well-cast D'Agostino seems always comfortable in his role. He rarely struggles with a line, and his sweet-sad voice lends a perfect note to his portrayal of the bewildered brother who discovers an unpleasant truth about the father for whom, early in his life, he sacrificed so much.

As the affluent brother, Walter, who knows where he's going and goes there, Larry Sweet hits the mark precisely. Looking razor-sharp in his pricey suit and haircut, he comes on like a well-oiled machine, oozing a subtle kind of unctuous charm. An interesting actor to watch onstage, he looks born to play this complicated, full-of-surprises character.

In the role of Solomon, the wise old dealer who carries "tasty snacks around in his battered briefcase and often adds delightful comic relief to the drama, Phil Whelan performs admirably, too. Somehow, it eventually doesn't seem to matter that his 90-year-old character's New York Jewish accent fades in and out with regularity. Whelan manages to make Solomon comical, touching, and dignified



STEPHEN CASTELL/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Thought-provoking: Gail Sahney (Esther) and Tom D'Agostino (Vic) in a scene from the Birmingham Village Players' production of Arthur Miller's "The Price."

by turns — no small feat for any actor.

Gail Sahney as Vic's wife Esther is an attractive actress and, most of the time, carries off her rather tricky role here with aplomb. She manages prim, dithery, loving, and slightly mercenary with no trouble at all. Then, somewhere in the second act, she starts to whine. She whines so much in the second act that you begin entertaining thoughts of leaping from

your seat and shouting, "Stop whining!"

Eventually, it all subsides, and by play's end, Sahney's character has regained her appeal.

Sound, makeup, costumes, and most other peripherals contribute in a positive way to the production.

Victoria Diaz is a Livonia-based freelance who specializes in arts and entertainment articles in the metro area.

Marlo Thomas stars in profound comedy

Performances of "Six Degrees of Separation," at the George Burns Theatre through Feb. 14. For ticket information, call (800) 889-8000 or ticketmaster, 645-6666.



KEELY WYGONIK

A young black man cleverly invades the lifestyles of the rich by assuming the guise of Sidney Poitier's son. It doesn't sound like material for a comedy, but Marlo Thomas, who is starring in John Guare's "Six Degrees of Separation," with John Cunningham, assures me it is.

"You're laughing the first 40 minutes and getting clicks about life," said Thomas. "There are many surprises. You don't know what's going to happen."

Thomas plays Ouisa, and Cunningham her husband Flan, an art dealer.

The show, playing at the George Burns Theatre for the Performing Arts in Livonia through Feb. 14, is set in New York.

"She's a woman who thinks she has a perfect life, yet she and her children have no relationship. They are a couple who haven't taken their emotional temperature in years," said Thomas. "They are great anecdotes — people who feel tragic when something happens, then it's a joke the next day. They distance themselves from pain."

Paul (Ntare Mwine), who attends their daughter's school, comes into their lives, and changes her forever. He brings imagination and spirit.

If the story sounds familiar, maybe it's because you remember hearing about a charming well-dressed teenager who told people he was Sidney Poitier's just-mugged son. He talked his way into the homes of prominent Manhattan residents and stole from them. One of the people was Guare's friend.

But the story isn't about him, it's about trust, faith, relationships, race,

and the connections between them. The play scrutinizes such serious social situations as white liberal guilt, the gulf between generations, alienation and the need to belong, loveless family relationships, upscale greed, the power of education, and celebritymania. There are 17 people in the cast.

"John Guare is a brilliant writer," said Thomas. "This play is a plea — let's respect life, let's be aware of how we're separated from each other, and realize it's not important."

One of Ouisa's lines in the play is "I read somewhere that everybody on this planet is separated by only six people. Six degrees of separation. Between us and everyone on this planet."

It's possible that someone in the audience at the George Burns Theatre has a connection to Thomas. The daughter of the late Danny Thomas, Marlo was born in Detroit at Grace Hospital. Her sister-in-law lives in the Detroit area.

"My early childhood memories are

about my father working, and now I'm coming home to work. I've never done theater here. It's an emotional homecoming," said Thomas.

There's also a connection to George Burns, he's a family friend, who encouraged Marlo Thomas to pursue her acting career.

"When I was thinking about becoming an actress, George Burns said show business is the greatest life in the world. But my father thought I would be hurt if I didn't make it," she said. "After he saw me working on stage in London he knew I would be OK."

In "Six Degrees of Separation," Thomas said the audience will have a good time, look at themselves and their relationships, and have something to think about.

"I really love theater," she said. "I get a chance to stand on stage and tell a whole story from beginning to end. It's a thrill to hear the audience laugh."

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