

ON THE MARQUEE

Endearing musical

Plymouth Theatre Guild presents "Fiddler on the Roof," 8 p.m. Friday, Feb. 26, and Saturday, Feb. 27, in the Water Tower Theatre, 41001 W. Seven Mile, on the campus of the Northville Regional Hospital. Show continues weekends through March 13. Call 349-7100 for details.

Jewish Ensemble Theatre

American premiere of "Exile in Jerusalem," by Israeli playwright Motti Lerner, 8 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 27, at the Aaron DeRoy Theatre in the Jewish Community Center, 6600 West Maple Road, West Bloomfield. Shows — 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 28, 8 p.m. Wednesday, March 3, Thursday, March 4, and Saturday, March 6. For tickets, call 783-2900.

Chamber concert

The Detroit Chamber Winds will present a concert 7 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 28, at St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 620 Romeo Street in Rochester. The concert is the first performance in St. Paul's Artist Series. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$7 for students and seniors. For information, call 651-9361.

Joint concert

Aspiring virtuosos of the Livonia Youth Philharmonic will share the spotlight with Michigan's oldest classical orchestra, the Scandinavian Symphony Orchestra, 8 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 27, at Churchill High School, Newburgh Road, between Joy and Ann Arbor Trail, Livonia. Tickets are \$7 per person, \$15 for family ticket, available at the door. Featured guest soloist is violinist Melody Wootton of Troy. For information, call 532-3720.

George Burns Theatre

Direct from the Grand Ole Opry, featuring 17 of Patsy Cline's greatest hits, "Always... Patsy Cline," starring King Crowe as Patsy Cline, and Terry Myers as Louise, a fan the singer met on the road in her early days of touring. March 5-7 at the George Burns Theatre for the Performing Arts, 33330 Plymouth Road, Livonia. Tickets \$24.50. Call Ticketmaster, 646-6666, or the box office, 422-9200. There will be a \$5 charge for parking, \$8 valet parking for this special event.

First Theatre Guild

First Theatre Guild will present the musical "Babes in Toyland," 8 p.m. Friday, March 5, and March 12; matinee performances 2 p.m. Sunday, March 6, Saturday, March 13, and Sunday, March 14 in Knox Auditorium, First Presbyterian Church, 1669 W. Maple in Birmingham. Tickets are \$4 each or \$20 per family, at the door. Seating admitted free at the March 6 matinee. Call 644-0356 for information.

Children's events focus on fun

Folklorist Ella Jenkins will be featured at the "Saturday Fun for Kids" series at Oakland University's Meadow Brook Theatre on Feb. 27.



Folklorist and children's recording artist Ella Jenkins will appear as part of the "Saturday Fun for Kids" series 11 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 27, at the Oakland University's Meadow Brook Theatre in Rochester Hills. Seating is reserved. Tickets are \$6 each and available by calling 377-3300. The concert will last about one hour, and is not recommended for children under the age of 3. Doors open 10:30 a.m.

A regular guest on "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood," Jenkins has been praised throughout her 35 years as a performer for her emphasis on active participation and multi-cultural education. She knows songs, chants, rhythms, games and dances from many lands, and encourages audience participation at her concerts. She has performed for children on all seven continents, including Antarctica. In 1988, she traveled to Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China as part of an exchange program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

In 1989, she traveled to the Soviet Union and performed for the children of Moscow and Kiev. Jenkins spends as much as 200 days a year on the road. Only half that time is spent performing; the other half is spent holding workshops



at universities and children's agencies. To each performance she carries a bag of small portable instruments, including maracas, clave sticks, castanets and harmonicas.

"Saturday Fun for Kids" series also includes an April 3 presentation of "Hansel and Gretel" by the International Puppet Place.

Here are some other children's events in the area. The Jewish Community Center with Ted E. Bear Productions (subsidiary company of Nancy Gurwin Productions) presents the Leo Ahlin

and Philip Hall musical "Beauty and the Beast," 12:30 p.m. kosher luncheon, 2 p.m. show, Sunday, Feb. 28 at the Jewish Community Center, 6600 W. Maple Road, West Bloomfield, and 2 p.m. Sunday, March 14 at the Jewish Community Center, Jimmy Morris Building, 15110 W. 10 Mile, Oak Park.

Laura Buono of Rochester portrays Beauty. The cost is \$12.50 for lunch and show. Call 651-1000, Ticketmaster, 646-6666 or Nancy Gurwin, 354-0545 for reservations. The Cotton Candy Kids of Northville's Historic Marquee Theatre will be presenting "Pooh Visits Story-

Fun concert: Folklorist Ella Jenkins will perform at Meadow Brook Theatre's "Saturday Fun for Kids Series" on Feb. 27.

land," 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Saturdays, Feb. 27 and March 6 and 2:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 28. Tickets are \$5. Call 349-8110 for information. The theater is at 135 E. Main Street, Northville.

The Youth Theatre of the Bloomfield Players will present J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Hobbit" 8 p.m. Friday, March 5 and March 12, Saturday, March 6 and March 13, and 2 p.m. Sunday, March 7 and March 14 at the Andover High School theater, 4200 Andover Road, Bloomfield Hills. Adult tickets, \$7, students and seniors \$6. Tickets available at the door. For information, call 433-0885.

Skilled cast, fine music in 'Wonderglass'

Donald Baker, principal oboist with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, will be the soloist at the next American Artists chamber concert, 3 p.m. Sunday, March 28, at Kingswood Auditorium, Cranbrook campus, 600 Lone Pine, Bloomfield Hills. Tickets \$12.50. For information, call 851-5044.

By ISABELLE JOHNSTON SMITH
SPECIAL WRITER

A near-capacity audience of over 350 hardy souls braved snow, sleet and cold Sunday, Feb. 21, to witness the American Artists Series world premier production of singer, composer, librettist Susan Batti's work-in-progress chamber opera, "Wonderglass," at Kingswood Auditorium on the Cranbrook campus in Bloomfield Hills.

"Wonderglass" is based on the whimsical improvised stories gentle Oxford Don Charles Dodgson (Lewis Carroll) related to the three children of his Dean (among them his favorite,

Alice) to while away their lazy weekend afternoons picnicking on the banks of the Thames River in the 1850s. However, Batti's 20th century evocations of the "Queen of Hearts," the "Mad Hatter," "March Hare," "Mock Turtle," the "Ugly Duchess" and Cook rely more on sharp wit and biting satire — and musical references to jazz, show tunes, choral reading, recitative, scat, folk and ethnic idioms.

Full of dissonances, minor keys, unresolved chords, atonalities, complicated rhythms, harmonic 4th and 7ths, and sudden strong, dramatic shifts in scale, dynamics and tempo, this is a sophisticated, but fairly melodic-wonderland, indeed.

When 9-year-old Carly Baruh's "Alice" asks — "would you tell me please where I ought to go from here?" and the Cheshire Cat answers — "that depends a good deal on where you want to go," Batti is summing up her

concept for "Wonderglass" — a concept which explores the boundaries of the 20th century imagination using Lewis' 19th century characters and dialogue as vehicles.

What results is a work full of irony, wit, humor and (sometimes) tenderness. Notable among the songs are "Which Way?," "How I Love to Play Croquet," "Soup, Beautiful Soup," "The Mad Duchess Arle," "Off with their Heads," "The Jabberwock," and the folk tune-like conclusion "The Old Man at the Gate." Albeit most of these are not immediately "hum-able."

Batti and her talented cast — Diane Kessling, mezzo-soprano; Keene Benson, tenor 1; David Fry, tenor 2; Sherman Jacobs, bass-baritone; Carly Baruh, Alice; Pablo Zinger, conductor, and Batti, soprano, assisted ably by American Artist Series musicians Joanne Fyerman, piano; Randall Hawes, trombone; Russell Mallare, saxophone; Stephen Molino, bass; Er-

vin Monroe, flute; Theodore, Olen, clarinet; and Jane Rosenson, harpist, broke down the barriers between reality and imagination, dreams and nightmares, the ordinary and the surreal; between sense and nonsense, whimsy and menace, in a compelling and vivid production.

The lack of costumes and scenery was of little note because the cast's considerable singing and acting skills — abetted by a fine chamber orchestra and conductor — were enough to engage the imagination and the undivided attention of the audience.

As the narrator intoned at the conclusion — "Mark this day with a white stone!" and a red lettered And bravo! This was, in fact, a "brillig" afternoon.

Isabelle Johnston Smith of Birmingham, a former professional singer, serves on the Detroit Symphony Orchestra's Hill Volunteer Council Board of directors, and on the boards of other area arts organizations.

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