

ENTERTAINMENT

ON THE MARQUEE

Jewish Ensemble Theatre

Jules Feiffer's "Grown Ups" opened for preview performances 8 p.m. Wednesday, April 21, at the Aaron DeRoy Theatre, at the Jewish Community Center, 6600 W. Maple Road, West Bloomfield. Regular performances begin 8 p.m. Sunday, April 25 through May 16. For ticket information, call 788-2900 or Ticketmaster, 645-6666.

Youth theatre

Bloomfield Players Youth Theatre will present two drama productions at Andover High School, 4200 Andover Road at Long Lake Road, one block west of Telegraph, Bloomfield Hills, on April 30 and May 1. "The Tales of Hans Christian Andersen" will be presented 7 p.m. Friday, April 30, and 1 p.m. Saturday, May 1. "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown," will be presented 8:15 p.m. Friday, April 30, and 2:15 p.m. Saturday, May 1. Tickets are \$2 and may be bought at the door. For more information, call 433-0885.

Meadow Brook Theatre

Banjo picking and Bible thumping will be heard at Oakland University's Meadow Brook Theatre when the bluegrass gospel musical comedy "Smoke in the Mountains" opens 8 p.m. Thursday, April 22. Performances will be given Tuesdays through Thursdays until May 16 on the university campus in Rochester Hills. For ticket information, call 377-3300 or Ticketmaster, 645-6666.

Requiem

Central United Methodist Church, Detroit, and St. Matthew's United Methodist Church, Livonia, will present John Rutter's "Requiem" and a choral work by Ralph Vaughn Williams with handbell accompaniment, 4 p.m. Sunday, April 25, in St. Matthew's sanctuary, 30900 W. Six Mile, Livonia. For information, call 422-6038.

Dinner theater

The Mala Wisla Polish Folk Dance Ensemble will hold its annual dinner theater and recital 2:30 p.m. Sunday, April 25, in the gym at Madonna University, 3650 S. Colebrook, on the corner of Levan in Livonia. The event will include a traditional Polish meal and a recital of Polish folk songs and dances. Admission is \$12 for adults, \$7 for children ages 5 to 10. For information, call 469-6696.

Choral Celebration

The Schoolcraft College Community Choir will present two performances of its annual spring concert, "A Choral Celebration," 4 p.m. Sunday, April 25, at Northville First United Methodist Church, on Eight Mile west of Taft, and 8 p.m. Saturday, May 1, at Faith Lutheran Church, on Five Mile, west of Middlebelt in Livonia. There will be no charge for either concert, but donations will be accepted at intermission. For information, call 462-4448.



Douglas Sills, formerly of Franklin Village, will portray the scheming Dr. Neville Craven and the grieving widower Uncle Archibald in the award-winning musical "The Secret Garden" which opens April 27 at the Fisher Theatre.

"The Secret Garden" opens 8 p.m. Tuesday, April 27, and runs through May 16 at the Fisher Theatre, 3011 W. Grand Boulevard, Detroit. For ticket information, call 872-1000. To charge tickets by phone, call Ticketmaster, 645-6666.

By KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER

Most plays are either for adults or for children. "The Secret Garden," a Tony Award-winning musical featuring Franklin Village native Douglas Sills, is for both.

Sills describes it as a musical drama. "There is humor, but it's more dramatic. It's a great musical. The songs serve to augment and enhance a terrific story."

Inspired by the Francis Hodgson Burnett children's novel of the same name, "The Secret Garden" tells the story of a young girl sent to live with her uncle on the English moors in 1906. On his large estate she discovers a secret walled garden. Her loving attention brings the garden back to life, even as it heals her own spiritual wounds and those of the people around her.

"This is a rare opportunity for people to bring their children, and younger relatives to the theater. Adults and children will enjoy the play and each other's presence. They can talk about it afterwards."

Sills, a 1992 graduate of the University of Michigan with a bachelor of arts degree in music, and of Cranbrook Kingswood High School, said the play is "like vitamins for the soul. It's a very healing, nurturing experience."

For an actor, it's a challenge. Sills,

who now makes his home in Los Angeles, has been on the road with the national touring company of "The Secret Garden" for more than a year. He did manage to squeeze in a visit to his parents in West Bloomfield during Passover while the show was in Grand Rapids.

He talked by telephone from his hotel room in Cincinnati. From there he was going with the show to Columbus. When it opens in Detroit, he will have performed it 400 times. When the show closes in Detroit, he'll go to Des Moines, Iowa, to continue the tour.

"It's difficult on your personal life," said Sills, who is single. "But it's very gratifying. Few people can do what they want and get paid for it. You make a sacrifice."

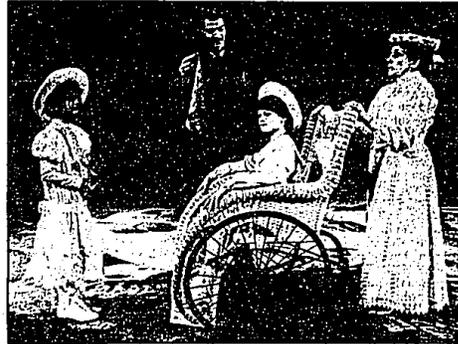
Sills' former voice teacher at Cranbrook Kingswood, Nina Machus of Bloomfield Village, said she is not at all surprised by his success.

"He is one of my top students. He's one of those people that has it all — he's intelligent, a wonderful singer, a good actor, and good-looking. He was always involved in music and drama."

Machus, who now teaches private voice lessons and classes at The Community House in Birmingham, said it's been exciting to see Sills succeed in his career.

"I feel just wonderful about it," she said. "You see a lot of kids who have the potential, but don't go after it. He did."

For the first part of the run, Sills will portray the villain, scheming Dr. Neville Craven. Then he'll switch roles and portray Uncle Archibald, who has never gotten over the death



MARTHA SPOWE ASSOCIATES, CAROL ROSEGG

Secret Garden: Demaree Alexander (left), Douglas Sills, Sean Cosidine (in wheelchair) and Mary Fogarty in a scene from the national tour of the hit musical, "The Secret Garden."

of his beautiful wife, Lily.

"We couldn't be more different which makes it a joy," said Sills, explaining that there are two understudies for every role so that if something happens "the show will go on."

"Uncle Archibald is 35 to 40 years old. He has a hunchback, he's extremely depressed and neurotic. He's searching for peace of mind and trying to heal the grief that never healed over," said Sills.

"Dr. Neville Cravin, Archibald's brother, is better looking, but he has a darker view of the world, and is very pessimistic. Archibald got everything when their parents died because of the inheritance law in Victorian England. As a result, he expects less from the world around him, and gives less. He's looking for self-respect."

Trained as a classical actor, Sills had to master a British dialect for his roles, and learn how to walk with a hunchback and limp. "If I play a hunchback eight times a week and don't do it right, I will hurt my back," he said.

The singing is also challenging — Archibald is a tenor, Neville is a baritone.

"I'm working with a talented cast that keeps me on my toes, and helps me do my work," he said. "I'm looking forward to being back home. It's a rare opportunity to combine work and a visit with family and friends. I don't have to feel bad about missing auditions. I'm looking forward to introducing the cast to Michigan. And I'd like to thank Cranbrook for their nurturing."

Cantor makes MOT debut in 'Aida'



MARY JANE DEERR

Michigan Opera Theatre will present four performances of Giuseppe Verdi's masterpiece, "Aida," Saturday, May 15, Wednesday, May 19, Saturday, May 22 and Sunday, May 23 at Masonic Temple, 500 Temple, Detroit. The production will be sung in Italian with English subtitles. For ticket information, call 874-SING or Ticketmaster, 645-6666.

Gail Hirschenfang laughed when she heard why she would be singing off stage as the High Priestess in her

School of Sacred Music. Her soprano voice is one that should be heard. In 1992, she soloed with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra under Leslie Dunner, and with the MOT Orchestra under Mitchell Krieger, in appearances at Temple Beth El. She has performed numerous times with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra under Julius Rudel and Semyon Bychkov.

"In traditional Judaism, a woman's voice is not permitted to be heard in the religious service," said Hirschenfang who has been the cantor doing life cycle events at Temple Beth El in Birmingham since 1989. She is a 1976 graduate of the Hebrew Union College

Mitchell Krieger, director of artistic resources for MOT, was impressed with her performance at Temple Beth El and asked her to do the one page solo in Aida.

See CANTOR, B8



Featured soloist: Gail Hirschenfang will be singing off stage as the High Priestess in Michigan Opera Theatre presentation of "Aida."

IN PERSON
World Renowned Artist
TING SHAO KUANG
SATURDAY, MAY 1 • 2-5 P.M.
AT
LOUIS GALLERY, INC.
Come meet this "National Chinese Treasure" at our gala reception where he will autograph posters and books.
FEATURING
Scripatures • Sculpture • Originals
Posters • Books
LOUIS GALLERY, INC.
3852 28TH ST. S.E. • GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49512
(616) 942-7120 • 800-752-4558
Call us for directions

Good Health on Your Mind?
Be sure to attend the April 24, 1993
International Health Expo
Mercy Center
Farmington Hills, Michigan
10 AM-7 PM '86 at the door
For information, call
(313) 563-8436
Sponsored by The Society for the Advancement of Alternative Teachings (313) 837-2847

ORLANDO OR MUSKEGON?
Guess where you can ride the only two roller coasters in Michigan. Or where you can go under water in a real World War II submarine. Now imagine a dazzling sunset with your dinner... on a cruise boat... on Lake Michigan. Followed by a laser light show on the waterfront. Yes, there's a "world" of magical fun right here, and we're much closer than Florida.
Surprise It's Muskegon County!
Get your **FRES** travel information packet from Muskegon County, Michigan.
CALL TOLL-FREE TODAY 1-800-235-FUNN

Marriott.
When you're counting on having a special weekend together.
Enjoy a Marriott Two For Breakfast™ Weekend. Rates are per night, per person, and are available Thursday through Sunday nights with breakfast included. Call for reservations 356-7400
\$49
SOUTHFIELD Marriott.
2703 Northwestern Highway, Southfield, Michigan 48034 (313) 356-7400
Limited space available. Rates are subject to change without prior notice. Some Marriott rates apply. *1993 Marriott Corporation

Now Under New Management
New Chef & New Menu!
Help us rename our new restaurant and win a weekend at the beautiful
Townsend Hotel
Come and see us for details
This Week's Special
Succulent 12 oz. Steer **\$10.95**
NORMS
RESTAURANT & LOUNGE
29110 Franklin Rd., Southfield 357-4442