

ON THE
MARQUEE

Country music

The Forbes Brothers, musicians who co-own and manage Mr. B's Food & Spirits, 5946 Rochester Road, Troy, 689-6070, will perform at the 1993 Detroit Hoedown, Hart Plaza on Jefferson in downtown Detroit, 4-6 p.m. Friday, May 7. You can also hear them play at Mr. B's during "Sunday Night Jam," a weekly jam session which begins at 9:30 p.m.

Hilarious farce

Plymouth Theatre Guild presents "Noises Off," a British farce, 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, May 7-8, May 14-15, May 21-22, and 6 p.m. Sunday, May 16, at the Water Tower Theatre on the campus of the Northville Regional Hospital, 41001 W. Seven Mile Road. Opening night, buy one ticket get one free. Adults \$8 at door, \$7 advance, seniors and children \$7 at the door, \$6 advance. Call 349-7100.

Delightful operetta

St. Beda Players will present "Naughty Marjette," at Southfield High School on 10 Mile Road at Evergreen, Southfield, 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, May 7-8, 14-15, and 2 p.m. Sunday, May 16. Call 540-6943 or 557-7245 for tickets.

Community chorus

The 90 voice Farmington Community Chorus presents its annual spring concert 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, May 7-8 at Harrison High School on 10 Mile Road between Orchard Lake Road and Middlebelt, Farmington Hills. Several soloists and small ensembles will also perform. Tickets \$5 general admission, \$5 seniors and students, \$3 children 10 and younger. Call 471-4516 for information.

Funny show

Ridgeville Players present "Lend Me A Tenor," 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, May 7-8, May 14-15, May 21-22, 3 p.m. Sunday, May 9 and May 23, and 7 p.m. Sunday, May 16, at the playhouse, 205 Long Lake Road, Troy. Tickets, \$8, Sunday shows are \$7 for seniors. Call 644-8329.

Auditions

Eisenhower Dance Ensemble will be holding auditions, noon Saturday, May 15 in Room 132 of Verner Hall on the campus of Oakland University, Rochester. Call 370-3024 or 652-7195.

Outdoor dining

The Wooden Horse Inn, 6725 Rochester Road, Troy, has unveiled two outdoor dining areas which increase the historic farmhouse's seating from 250 to more than 350. The newly restored Wooden Horse Inn features a ground floor outdoor patio with a view of Sylvan Glen Golf Course and second-floor deck overlooking Rochester Road. The inn specializes in traditional American inn cooking. Hours are 11 a.m. to midnight Monday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to 1 a.m. Friday and Saturday, and 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. Sunday. For information, call 879-1555.

Excellent cast in
JET's 'Grown Ups'



CATHIE
BREIDENBACH

Jules Feiffer's "Grown Ups" at the Jewish Ensemble Theatre's Aaron DeRoy Theatre, may be billed as a comedy, but underlying the witty quips and slapstick shenanigans is heavyweight fare riddled with 1950s angst and inter-generational

tension. Feiffer views family dynamics as cyclical — the people go round and round on the same track year after year, condemned to repeat entrenched behavior patterns.

People may grow-up chronologically, but the roles they were assigned as children dictate their adult interactions.

Act 1 lays out the multiple idiosyncrasies of a family — Helen, the worried matriarch who burdens everybody with her criticism disguised as concern. Her husband, Jack (Jackie Marn), is the doting grandpa who goes along with his wife's programming rather than risk her indignation. Daughter Marilyn never gets to finish a story as a little girl and is still trying desperately as an adult to get her family's attention. And son Jake, a reporter for the New York Times who is bright, restless and acerbically critical, is like the elongated characters in Jules Feiffer's famous cartoons.

Jake's wife, Louise, brings to the family her own insecurities about

"GROWN UPS"
Theater Jewish Ensemble Theatre presentation in the Aaron DeRoy Theatre, Jewish Community Center, 6600 W. Maple Road, West Bloomfield
Closest Sunday, May 16
Discounts: Senior citizen and student discounts available
Curtain times: 8 p.m. Thursday, May 6, Wednesday, May 12, Thursday, May 13, Sunday, May 16; 8:45 p.m. Saturdays, May 8 and May 15; 2 p.m. Sundays, May 9 and May 16. May 12 performance will be signed for the hearing impaired.
Tickets: Price range, \$12 to \$19.50 Box office, 788-2900, TicketMaster, 645-6666.

whether she's a good mother, and a good wife. Their daughter, Edie (Caroline Kowatch), rounds out the three generations of a family whose dominant gene seems to be a talent for manipulating those they love most.

Feiffer's "comedy" is hardly uproarious, despite an excellent cast and a fine set by Andrew Beresford, who strikes a balance between detail and simplicity. Director Julie Nessen valiantly attempts to temper the angst in the play with visual humor.

Sometimes it works well, as when Marilyn (Claudia Hommel) tries to hide drinks from Helen who abhors drinking. Marilyn pours Scotchies when her mother is out of the room, then like a little girl, caught in forbid-



Family drama: Caroline Kowatch as Edie (left), John Siebert as Jake and Terry Heck as Louise in a scene from the Jewish Ensemble Theatre presentation of Jules Feiffer's "Grownups."

den naughtiness, hides the incriminating drinks behind her back when her mother reappears.

Guild tangles her tongue and muddies her story as she negotiates around the kitchen, careful to keep her back and the verboten drinks out of her mother's sight. The audience identifies with Marilyn, the grown up naughty child still a bit afraid of her own mother.

But the visual humor doesn't click when Helen, who loves the limelight, stands up the way little kids do to recite a poem and later dances a vaude-

ville soft shoe. Shirley Benyas as Helen delivers guilt-inducing lines much better than she delivers her vaudeville capers.

On a recent night, the audience didn't respond when they were supposed to at least chortle at the shenanigans of a 60-something grandma addicted to showing off.

The slapstick of John Siebert as Jake and Terry Heck as Louise, however, succeeds in getting laughs as they catapult around their living room, arguing and needing one another.

Magnificent voices, exquisite set in 'Secret Garden'

BY JUDITH DONER BERNE
Staff Writer

I was nervous driving to the Fisher Theatre for the opening of "The Secret Garden."

How would they present the precious Pencil Hedges Burnett children's novel that I read over and over again as a child. And then read again to children of my own.

I couldn't be reassured by the fact that it claimed three Tony awards in 1991-92 or even that its adaptation had won author and lyricist Marsha Norman a Pulitzer Prize.

But the first glimpse of the Fisher stage and its charming Victorian needlepoint-like floral curtain together with the opening scene — a dream-like sequence set in India — becalmed me. And I soon settled back, feeling increasingly clear that author Norman and Lucy Simon who composed the wonderful music had treasured the book as much as I.

I'm partial to musicals with a solid story line — not just inane dialogue to segue to singing and dancing. "The Secret Garden" tells the story of a young girl, Mary, raised in India and sent to live with her uncle, Archibald, on the English moors in 1906 — after

"SECRET GARDEN"
Theater: Fisher Theatre, Fisher Building, Detroit
Closest Sunday, May 16
Discounts: Children age 17 and younger \$10 off ticket price except Friday and Saturday nights
Curtain times: 8 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday; 7:30 p.m. Sunday; 2 p.m. Saturday and Sunday; 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday.
Tickets: Price range, \$25 to \$50. Box office, 872-1004, Ticketmaster, 645-6666.

her parents have died of cholera. She discovers an unintended secret world garden on his large, lonely estate and brings it to life. In the process, she heals her own spirit and that of the people around her. Prime among these are her lonely widowed uncle and her sickly cousin Colin.

Everything about the Fisher's production spells Broadway. The set design and costuming is exquisite. The troupe is well-cast with magnificent voices. But in particular, in his hometown newspaper, I'd like to highlight Douglas Sills, a native of Franklin Village and graduate of Cranbrook Kingswood Upper School and the University of Michigan.

Opening night, Sills played the role of Dr. Neville Craven, the villain of the play. In a poignant duet entitled "Lily's Eyes" with his brother Archibald and later in "Quartet," he exhibits a wonderfully resonant baritone. But those of you who attend the production later in its run will see Sills switch and play Archibald, which requires a tenor voice.

Sills, who trained as a classical actor, cherishes his roots. In an earlier interview, he says how happy he is to play in his hometown and credits his Cranbrook voice teacher, Nina

Machus of Bloomfield Village, as well as Cranbrook for its "nurturing."

Although "The Secret Garden" is based on a children's book and features children in the cast, it does not cater to children. It is a sophisticated presentation which is better enjoyed by those ages 10 and up. It is a particularly good vehicle for introducing middle schoolers and teenagers to top-notch theater. But it is designed for adults.

In the summer of 1989, "The Secret Garden" began as a reading at Capital Rep/Skidmore college; a production was staged at the Virginia Stage Company in Norfolk, Va. the following December. It has been running at the St. James Theatre on Broadway for a little over two years.

In this era of English imports and revivals of classic American musicals dominating Broadway, "The Secret Garden" gives us hope that the made-in-America musical can bloom again.

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