Funny cast entertains in 'Berkshire Night Live'

SALLY DUBATS

"Berkshire Night Live is a series of comedy skits and song and dance which pulls from the attitudes of "Saturday Night Live," "Forbidden Broadway," and "Capitol Steps," with a smattering of game show spoofs for good measure.

Produced, written and staged by Michael Klier of Farmington Hills, the original material is on-again-off-again; some skits are very funny, crisp and fresh, while others lack refinement and bite.

The many topics covered — politics, Broadway show tunes, local events, and old TV theme songs — occasionally obscure the focus of the show.

Yet, set admidst the cozy surroundings of the Berkshire Hotel in Southfield, "Berkshire Night Live" still proves to be an entertaining evening with a talented cast of five.

The better moments in the show include Paul Riopelle as he pulls off a myriad of fun antics. His animated face adds to the many characters he portrays. Particularly funny is Riopell's interpretation of "Coincidence? I Think Not!" JFK is compared to Lincoln. Nixon is compared to Clinton — after all, both Clinton and Nixon have two syllables in their names. Coincidence?

Also offered is a talented Marnie Baumer of Garden City singing a comical "Squeeze Me" with campy nostalgic style. Baumer also shines as Hillary Clinton. Unfortunately, Baumer's monologue — "A Confused Critic's Lament," offered exhausted material while listing the alphabet for everything wrong with theater in the Detroit and metro area.

Robert Allman's performance is especially dynamic in the skit "Kelvorian (Our Way!)." Portraying a comical suicide assistance distributor, Allman of Southfield, and cast sing "Killer" to the tune of Michael Jackson's "Thriller," as members of the cast are "assisted" one at a time.

Ellen Terri has a terrific musical voice and a respectable amount of stage presence. She adds zest to the show with funny faces and comedy timing. One poor moment, however, is "Chelsea S'Corner." Rather than impersonating our president's daughter, Terri imitates the late Gilda Radner as Roseanne Rosanna Danna with an irritating monologue.

One new twist to this revue is the use of pianist as actor and singer. Cabaret shows usually leave pianists in the background to accompany, but pianist Jeff Bayson is an integral part of the show.

Bayson's commercial announcements were funny and well timed, and his onstage "Phantom of the 1950s," with the cast was a fun point of the evening.

"Berkshire Night Live," is an evolving show which changes with the news and times. Some of it is fun, some not. But there will be new items and surprises added during its run through the end of June.

Sally Dubats of Madison Heights is an an actress, director and teacher, who teaches at community theaters in the metropolitan area. She is artistic director of West End Productions headquartered in Livonia.

"BERKSHIRE NIGHT LIVE"
Theater: The Berkshire Hotel, 26111 Telegraph, Southfield.
Closes: Saturday, June 26
Curtain times: 9 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays.
Tickets: Per person $12.95, per couple $24 from the Berkshire Hotel and all Ticketmaster outlets. Overnight package available. Call 356-4333.
Benefit: For HAVEN, Oakland Coutny's Domestic Violence Shelter and Sexual Assault Conseling Center, 5 p.m. Friday, May 21. Tickets $59 per person includes dinner, theater, and overnight package. Dinner and show only $45 per person. Call 356-4333 for information. Tickets still available.

Comedy cast: *Terri Ellen (left), Robert Allman, Marnie Baumer and Paul Riopelle, star in "Berkshire Night Live," at the Berkshire Hotel in Southfield.*

■ Ellen Terri has a terrific musical voice and a respectable amount of stage presence. She adds zest to the show with funny faces and comedy timing.

Jazz groups to present concert

The Southfield Lathrup Music Boosters with the co-sponsorship Continental Cablevision is featuring the renowned Randy Scott and Sasse' in a jazz concert 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 26 at the Southfield Lathrup High School Auditorium, 19301 W. 12 Mile Road, Lathrup Village.

Tickets are $7.25 and available at all Ticketmaster outlets, 645-6666. For more information, call Marilynn Leedom, 552-9078 or the school band office, 746-7293.

An accomplished musician, Randy Scott has been inspired by Grover Washington Jr. since their first meeting in 1982. Considering his versatility composing, singing and playing both the saxophone and keyboard, he identifies technically with classical, jazz, *gospel and contemporary pop* music.

In May of 1991, Scott implemented a motivational program in the Flint Public School District. His focus in the program is to encourage children to stay in school, to investigate the career opportunities and to be persistent in their goals. As a certified educator, he has taught in the Southfield Public School District and currently tutors privately.

He performs regularly with Sasse' a group he put together. They have opened shows for comedian, Sinbad, and have performed in many cities around the country.

Also performing at the concert are the national and state award-winning jazz groups from Southfield Lathrup High School, the Vocal Jazz Ensemble, and the Jazz Combo.

Jazz concert: *Randy Scott will present a concert at Southfield Lathrup High School Auditorium on May 26.*

Spring concerts feature vocal jazz groups

Schoolcraft College's S'Cool Jazz Vocal Group will perform their "Swingtime" concert 8 p.m. Wednesday, May 26, in the college's Waterman Campus Center.

An exciting variety of vocal jazz music from the 1930s through the present will be performed combining lush harmony and driving rhythm. Featured guests are the Southfield-Birney Middle School Varsity Jazz Choir.

Tickets are $3, and $2 for students and seniors, available at the door. For information, call 837-9316.

Also of note is the Mercy High School Spring Concert featuring the Mercyaires, Mercy Dance Company, Mercy Orchestra and all choral groups. Tickets are $5 and can be purchased at the door or in advance by calling 476-3270.

The program will include Vivaldi's "Gloria," jazz, ballet and tap numbers and classical orchestra pieces.

As a special feature, the Honorable Myron Wahls and his Jazz Trio will perform. Mercy High School is at 29300 11 Mile Road, Farmington Hills.

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