

'Wide Sargasso Sea' expands Bronte character

BY JOHN MONAGHAN
SPECIAL WRITER

In Charlotte Bronte's classic novel "Jane Eyre," temperamental Rochester hides his looney first wife in the attic. Only rumor and speculation hint at how the woman was driven to madness, mad enough to leap to her death after setting fire to the mansion.

The character long fascinated author Jean Rhys, who created a sweeping history for her in the 1966 novel "Wide Sargasso Sea." The new film version by Australia-

lian director John Duigan, currently at the Mapple, offers a fascinating and sensual look at a 19th-century Creole heiress driven mad on a Caribbean island.

She marries Rochester (Nathaniel Parker), a typically stuffy Englishman keeping a stiff upper lip amidst the oppressive heat and unmitigated ways of the natives. Outfitted in a high-collared shirt, jacket and ascot, he takes the wealthy Antoinette in an arranged marriage.

Antoinette (Karina Lombard), who was born here, is more re-

laxed and open to this environment. For awhile they are recklessly happy until a blackmailer and a madman fill the husband's head full of stories about his bride and her family.

Rochester now treats his wife coldly. His passion, once inspired by her primitive nature, turns from amorous to violent. Antoinette, meanwhile, begs her native psychiatrist, Christophene (Claudia Robinson) to restore their love with "obeah," the local brand of voodoo.

"Wide Sargasso Sea" sustains

MOVIES

its steamy atmosphere through its lush locale, a primeval jungle buzzing with ever-present birds and insects. Cinematographer Geoff Burton bathes his images in heat and sweat, especially in the myriad sex scenes, while ex-Police drummer Stewart Copeland blends both modern and primitive sounds in his percussive score.

The movie has an NC-17 rating, most likely due to explicit

shots of both the male and female anatomy. This, after all, is a movie about mood and sensuality rather than plot, which in weaker moments recalls both Harlequin romances and "Mandingo."

As Antoinette's mother and stepfather, Rachel Ward and Michael York head a supporting cast much more recognizable than the attractive leads. We learn that our heroine's condition has a family precedent since Antoinette's mother was similarly taken for mad and locked away in loneliness and desperation.

The idea that each of the characters is caught in a net of his or her own making has a visual referent in one spooky shot. A drowned sailor is pulled out of the water, having failed in his quest to free a boat from the underwater weed beds that block passage through the wide Sargasso Sea.

Rochester later dreams that he, too, is trapped by the waving weeds. In a nightmare image, his wife's face floats toward him before he jerks awake in fright.

Though linked strongly to its predecessor, "Wide Sargasso Sea" successfully stands on its own as an exotic set piece and a tragic romance.

Attempting of what's playing at alternative movie theaters throughout metro Detroit as reviewed by John Monaghan.

HENRY FORD CENTENNIAL
LIBRARY
1871 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. Call 943-2330 for information. (Free)

- Animal shorts — "Horse with the Flying Tail" (1976) and "Little Dog Lost" (1968) starting at 7

p.m. June 7. The horse is a golden palomino that leaps to international fame after winning jumping competitions. The dog is a Welsh Corgi who sets out to find a master who will help him overcome his fear of brooms.

MAPLE THEATER
4135 W. Maple Road, Bloomfield Hills. Call 855-9090 for show times. (\$5.76 evenings; \$2.95 twilight)

"Like Water for Chocolate" (Mexico — 1992). A lonely woman puts all her energies into creating unforgettable meals in this blend of fantasy and drama. As with the Danish hit "Babettes Feast," you won't want to watch on an empty stomach.

"Much Ado About Nothing" (USA — 1993). Kenneth Branagh, the force behind "Henry V," returns to Shakespeare with this delightful film adaptation of the popular comedy. Branagh, real-life wife Emma Thompson, Michael Keaton, Denzel Washington and Keanu Reeves star.

"Wide Sargasso Sea" (Australia — 1993). The prequel to Jane Eyre finds Rochester's first wife Antoinette driven mad on a Jamaican island. Australian director John Duigan ("Flirting") creates a sensual and fascinating portrait of a woman only referred to as the crazy woman in the attic in the original story.

MICHIGAN THEATER
603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Call 668-8397 for information and show times. (\$5; \$4 students and senior citizens)

"Tous Les Matins Du Monde" (France — 1992), through June 12. Gerard Depardieu stars as Marais, a famous cellist in the court of Louis XVI, who needs his tutelage under the reclusive Sainte Colombe. A feast for the ears and eyes, directed by Alain Corneau.

"The Match Factory Girl" (Fin-

land — 1989), through June 11. Director Aki Kaurismaki, before gaining international acclaim with "Ariel" and "Leningrad Cowboys," focuses on a young woman weighed down by her tedious job and dysfunctional family.

"Like Water for Chocolate" (Mexico — 1993), through June 19. A lonely woman puts all her energies into creating unforgettable meals in this blend of fantasy and drama. As with the Danish hit "Babettes Feast," you won't want to watch on an empty stomach.

REDFORD THEATER
17360 Lahser Road at Grand River, Detroit. Call 455-4857 for information.

"Sweet Rosie O'Grady" (USA — 1949), 8 p.m. June 11-12, 7 p.m. June 13 (organ overture begins a half hour before show time). A famous musical star (Betty Grable) returns from Europe to find a reporter (Robert Young) ready to expose her origins as a beer hall singer. The songs, by Mack Gordon and Harry Warren, include "Two Little Girls in Blue" and "Heaven Will Protect the Working Girl."

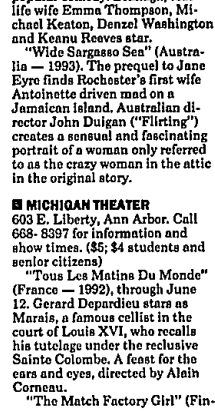
STATE THEATER
2115 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Call 961-5460 for information. (\$1.99)

"Young Frankenstein" (USA — 1974), 9 p.m. June 7. You won't be able to watch an old Frankenstein movie with a straight face after seeing Mel Brooks' inspired sen-

dup. Gene Wilder and Marty Feldman (remember him?) play doctor and assistant who create the creature from spare body parts. A young Terri Garr, Peter Boyle and Madeline Kahn also star.

If you have a comment for John Monaghan, call him at 953-2047, mailbox number 1866, on a touch tone phone, or write him care of Street Scene, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48160.

Mexican feast: Marco Leonardi and Lumi Cavazos star in "Like Water for Chocolate," now playing at the Maple Theater in Bloomfield Hills and Michigan Theater in Ann Arbor.



Warp Factor Karlos Barney

ELVIS LOOK-A-LIKE CONTEST

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'Tall Guy' offers bit of theater, humor

BY LEANNE ROGERS
STAFF WRITER

It's an actor's nightmare — trapped in a long running hack show serving as a human prop for an egomaniacal comedian. It's a part that doesn't even merit a name, only a description. Jeff Goldblum plays that part which provides the title for "The Tall Guy," a 1990 British comedy about a rather hapless American actor in London.

In a part he describes as "long legs, tiny psyche" Goldblum's Dexter King is dressed up in strange outfits and generally abused at performances nightly in his matinee. He explains there weren't a lot of options in London for actors who happened to be tall Americans. Dexter can't even get away from the pint-sized ham who is the star of the show, acidly

played by Rowan Atkinson, at home because he's on the television.

Dexter knows the sorry state of his career is in and his love life isn't any better. He's also suffering from hay fever and allergies to just about everything. It's his decision to finally seek treatment for his allergies that start a change in his life.

After convincing the doctors to prescribe oral medication, they express concern about his phobia regarding needles. Dexter becomes smitten with a nurse and decides to use the weekly injections as a means to get to know her. Needless to say, many weeks pass and Dexter still doesn't even know her name. But he has plenty of holes in his arms.

Dexter and the nurse, played by Emma Thompson, eventually get

VIDEO

together despite his humbling efforts. Thompson is very good as the smart, sharp-witted nurse who is direct about what she wants and goes after it. She's very observant and decisive, just how much so Dexter learns the hard way.

The second half of the film is a devoted to a funny parody of an overblown musical production as the tone deaf Dexter, finally fitted as the straight man, finds him cast in a new show, "Elephant!"

Fearful of being fired, Dexter ends up cast in the title role of the Elephant Man. The director liked his "awkwardness," his quality of being a victim and so clearly "someone else had crushed."

An exposure to some of Andrew

Lloyd Webber's musicals will be in addition to the enjoyment of this parody which features tunes like "Ain't Gonna Follow the Herd" and a Sarah Brightman look-alike. The tap dancing elephant chorus really has to be seen to be appreciated. Needless to say, the show is a hit.

The performances in the film are all very good, especially Goldblum's wry and insecure Dexter and Thompson sometime's playful nurse. Even for someone without a lot of exposure to theater can enjoy the humor in "The Tall Guy."

"The Tall Guy" is available on tape at local video stores. If you have a question or comment call LeAnne Rogers at 953-2103 or write her at The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48160.

"What the heck, I figure he'd be bald by now, too!"

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Therapist helped her deal with abuse

STREET SENSE

BARBARA SCHIFF

Barbara: I am the caller you quote in the column of May 24. I really appreciated the way you clarified the idea of objectivity.

I am in my 40s and have been in therapy for six years. It is through therapy that I have become able to face my past without feeling paralyzed as I was before I found an understanding and empathic helper. Because of my experience I don't believe that one can heal oneself. I believe that we need professional help. I had to go back and relive my experience and for that I needed someone to carry me through.

I want to share my experience, remembering the abuse and finding someone to help, with your readers. I believe that reading about my recovery can help others with their struggle.

I was 19 when I remembered my father exposing himself and demanding that my sister and I, 6 and 6 years old at the time, fondle him. I was in therapy

when I remembered, and I told my therapist. He answered, saying, "The only reason you tell me this is that you want me to do this to you. You have an Electra complex. What you are saying never happened."

His response confused me. It was 25 years ago and there was little publicity and education on sexual abuse. I didn't think others could understand my story, then, as I believe they do today. As I said, that is the reason I am sharing my story; I wish I had read one like it when I had read one like it when I remembered my father abusing me.

Even though I was confused, I stopped seeing this therapist. I did not see another one until I was in my 30s and unable to continue denying the memories. I told a new counselor; he affirmed me and for days I did not stop crying. Then, I understood that until he believed me that the abuse occurred, I did not believe myself.

This counselor referred me to a woman for the therapy he said I needed. He told me that in the initial stages I would be more able to trust a woman; he was right. I felt safer with her than I could have with a man.

Together, this woman and I worked hard to understand my

life experience. I still appreciate that she accepted me where I was and never tried to force me to tear down a wall of denial until I was ready to go further.

I learned that sexual abuse was only a small part of my sick family system. Other facts of our existence were as harmful as the sexual abuse. There was the emotional abuse. My father belittled me; he called me "ugly" and "stupid." He told me that no man could ever love me and that I could never amount to anything.

Worst of all we, my family, denied these realities of our existence. I learned that I was sicker because of the denial than because of the abusive behavior. One of the outcomes of getting better was that I was able to see my parents as people not as parents. This is one of the ways I moved toward independence from them.

I stopped seeing this therapist because I moved from one city to another. Since that move, I am in therapy again, this time with a man. This has worked out very well, too. I feel more hopeful than ever that I will one day be healed. All the time, I am less and less angry. The pain returns but with less intensity; I

am no longer overwhelmed by it.

I have a good job. I divorced my alcoholic husband, and I am thinking about dating. On many days, I feel spontaneous joy for no reason at all; I am happy to be alive.

Dear Caller,

Thank you for having the courage and generosity to share your story. It is beautiful. About two years ago a woman, whose father had killed her mother, wrote to me. In her letter, she said she did not believe someone else could help her overcome the sadness caused by her family experiences. She said she believed she would have to do it alone or that it could not be done. I hope she reads your letter. I believe as you do that in order to heal one needs professional help.

Again, thank you. Barbara

If you have a question or comment for Barbara Schiff, a trained therapist and experienced counselor, send it to Street Sense, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48160. You can also leave a message by calling 953-2047, mailbox 1877, on a Touch-Tone phone.

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