

ON THE
MARQUEE

Theater fund-raiser

The Birmingham Village Players will host the Actor's Company in a benefit presentation of Stephen Sondheim's adult musical "Into the Woods," 8 p.m. Wednesday, July 21, Friday, July 23, Saturday, July 24, 2 p.m. Sunday, July 25, and 8 p.m. Friday, Saturday and Sunday, July 29-31 at the Village Players playhouse on the corner of Hunter and Chestnut in Birmingham. Tickets \$12. Call 644-2075.

Family entertainment

The melodrama "Phantom of the Op'ry" produced by Ted E. Bear Productions and the Jewish Community Center will be presented 7 p.m. Tuesday, July 13 and 20 at the Jewish Community Center, 6600 West Maple, West Bloomfield. Bring your blankets and enjoy Theatre Under the Stars. Admission \$5 per person.

Youth band

The Youth Brass Band and Majorette Group from Debrecen, Hungary will present a concert 7 p.m. Sunday, July 11, at Our Shepherd Lutheran Church, 2225 E. 14 Mile Road in Birmingham. The concert is free and open to the public.

Children's musical

The Adventures of the Ugly Duckling will be presented by September Productions, a local professional touring company, 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. Saturdays, 2 p.m. Sundays, July 10 to Aug. 8 at Trinity House Theatre, 38840 W. Six Mile, Livonia. Tickets: \$5 adults, \$4 children, for more information, 615-0414.

Troy Players

Troy Players will present "Steppin' Out," 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, July 16-17, 23-24, and 2 p.m. Sunday, July 18 at the Troy Community Center, 520 W. Big Beaver Road, Troy. For tickets, call 879-1285.

Jazz

The Bloomfield Township Public Library will kick off its third annual "Jazz in July" concert series 2 p.m. Sunday, July 11, with Ursula Walker and Buddy Budson on the library grounds, 1099 Lone Pine Road at Telegraph, Bloomfield Hills. Concerts are free and open to the public. For information, call 642-5800.

Tassos

Tassos Epicurean Cuisine, 6887 Orchard Lake Road, West Bloomfield, will host a special dinner, *Francoise Extraordinaire*, 7:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday, July 15-16. Cost \$28.50 per person, call 639-0110 for reservations and information.

La Casa

Betty Elders performs at La Casa 8:30 p.m. Friday, July 16 in La Casa's 5th anniversary show at Birmingham Unitarian Church, 651 N. Woodward at Lone Pine, Birmingham. Advance tickets \$10, at the door \$12. Advance tickets available at It's the Hits clothing store, 193 W. Maple, Birmingham. For information, call 646-4950.

New company to present 'Godspell'



BARBARA MICHAELS

When the rock musical "Godspell" begins a four-week run at the Birmingham Theatre on July 8 it will also be the debut of Stage Door Productions, an independent company of regional talent. Based on the Gospel according to St. Matthew, "Godspell" takes a look at Jesus' lifetime. In keeping with the Biblical theme, one could say that the Birmingham Theatre "begat" Stage Door Productions.

Members of the Birmingham's backstage crew formed the new company to provide employment during summer months when nearly every major theater in the metropolitan Detroit area is shut down.

James Manduzzi, the producer of "Godspell," is the production manager for the Birmingham Theatre during the regular season.

Paul Hopper, the show's director, has been an actor at Meadow Brook Theatre for the past 11 years. He has also been an assistant stage manager at the Birmingham Theatre, acted and directed with Attie Theatre.

"It's harder than ever to find work in Michigan due to cuts in the state's arts budget," said Hopper during a recent interview at the Birmingham Theatre offices. "Sometimes even local producers think they can't find sufficient talent here, but it's just not true. There's a real talent base out there; just look at all the stars with Detroit-area origins."

In addition to Hopper, the creative team for "Godspell" includes musical director Dan Roth of Southfield, and choreographer Wendy Shapero of West Bloomfield. Eddie Sugerman of Southfield and Lynne Sherwood of Birmingham are among the cast members. Only two are from out of state.

While Stage Door Productions at present plans only summer shows, Roth said he hopes they might also inspire other fledgling companies.

A recent graduate of Wayne State University with a degree in acting, Roth comes from a musical family,

GODSPELL
Theater: A Stage Door Productions Presentation at the Birmingham Theatre, 231 S. Woodward, Birmingham.
Opens: Previews 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Thursday, July 8. Shows 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Thursday, 8 p.m. Fridays, 5 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Saturdays, and 3 p.m. Sundays, through Aug. 1.
Tickets: Range \$15 to \$19.50 per ticket. Tickets for 2 p.m. Thursday, July 8 performance are \$9.50. Tickets available at the Birmingham Theatre box office, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, noon to 4 p.m. Sunday. Ticketmaster outlets. Call 644-3533. To charge tickets, call 646-6666. Discounts: Available to groups, students and seniors.

PREVIEW

and said he finds his musicality surfacing more and more.

His mother is a music and vocal coach at Bay Middle School in Southfield, and recently Roth helped her form a jazz combo of sixth graders. He has also done musical direction for the Hilberry Theatre and composed for the Attie.

"Godspell," chosen by the producer with advice from the Birmingham Theatre staff, reflects the renewed interest in 1960s rock operas. "Joseph and His Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" recently had a major revival in Toronto. "Jesus Christ Superstar," had a successful revival at the Birmingham a few seasons back, and "Tommy" is currently a big hit on Broadway.

Hopper and Roth found they shared the same ideas about updating the music. "Godspell" first opened in 1971, with Stephen Schwartz's music and lyrics encompassing rock, folk and jazz.

"We're trying to bring the 1960s rock sound up to the 1990s," Roth said. "I'm re-treating many of the numbers. Giving a reggae sound to



DONNIE DOWDY

Rock musical: "Godspell," which opens July 8 at the Birmingham Theatre, is being presented by Stage Door Productions, an independent company that showcases regional talent.

"We Beseech Thee" is about the most radical departure, but I have many tricks up my sleeve."

"The show is easy to update," Hopper said. "This time it will be set in an old abandoned theater. We'll update the make-up and references to popular culture. The show works best in a small house, but we'll compensate by having cast members working out in the audience."

"That's a formula that has worked well at the Birmingham for both 'Nunsense I and II,'" Roth added.

Hopper sees the ensemble as both the production's greatest strength and greatest problem. "This is not a star vehicle; everyone in the cast gets a solo but otherwise serves as backup and is on stage at all times," he

said. "I have great faith in this cast, but I've only got two weeks of rehearsals to get everyone working as a unit."

The orchestra will be on stage instead of in the pit, and Roth will be the drummer as well as conductor. Shapero is the choreographer, and in the cast. Everyone connected with the production is juggling many jobs on both sides of the curtain.

The advantages are two-fold, Hopper said. "We're doing everything possible to save money, and the more experience an actor has in many aspects of theater the more marketable he is in today's tough job market."

Barbara Michaels is an inveterate playgoer who regularly catches up on all the New York productions.

Actress juggles many roles in musical

BY KEELY WYGNIK
STAFF WRITER

"Day By Day" one of the most memorable songs in "Camelot" will be sung by Wendy Shapero of West Bloomfield. She's been working very hard "Day By Day" designing dances to make Stage Door Productions presentation of this rock musical at the Birmingham Theatre memorable.

"Having to be in it and choreograph it gave me an identity crisis," said Shapero who designed dances for all 10 cast members in two weeks with only herself to work out all the movements. "It was tough standing in for 10 bodies."

If anyone was up to the challenge, it was Shapero. Just listening to her daily schedule is exhausting — 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. school, 1-10 p.m. rehearsals, 10:30 p.m. to 2 a.m. homework and working on routines for the show.

A senior at the University of Detroit-Mercy, Shapero, 21, is completing

her degree in theater. She'll graduate in December. Most recently she appeared in "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" and "Antigone," at the Attie/Strand Theatre.

Shapero began studying dance when she was three, and progressed to theater. She studied ballet with the Rose Marie Floyd Contemporary Civic Ballet Company of Royal Oak and continues to appear with the company when her schedule allows.

She is also trained in jazz, tap, and theatre dance, and has studied at Hofstra University in New York, in Greece with the University of Detroit Theatre Company, and at Wayne State University's Theatre Department.

Shapero has choreographed other shows. She was assistant choreographer of "Antigone," and part of the chorus.

See ACTRESS, 7B

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