

ON THE MARQUEE

Birmingham Theatre

The following matinee performances of Stage Door Productions' "Godspell" at the Birmingham Theatre, 231 S. Woodward, have been cancelled, 2 p.m. Thursdays, July 22 and July 29, 5 p.m. Saturdays, July 24 and July 31, and 3 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 1. Shows continue at 8 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays, and 8:30 p.m. Saturdays through Aug. 1. Ticket holders for canceled matinees can exchange their tickets for other performances or obtain a refund by calling 644-3533.

Outdoor concert

The Tallgate Ramblers will present a concert 7:30-9 p.m. today at Wilson Barn, Middlebelt at West Chicago in Livonia. One "Flight Up" will present a folk music concert 7:30-9 p.m. Thursday, July 29 at Wilson Barn. Bring lawn chairs or a blanket to sit on. Concerts are presented by the Livonia Arts Commission, Music Under the Stars. For more information, call 421-2000. Ext. 351 or the arts hot line, 425-2326.

Great Taste Festival

The first Great Taste in Downtown Rochester's Jazz and Food Festival will be 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday, July 24, on East Third Street. The festival will feature restaurants, artists and music including Lunar Octet at 1 p.m., the Keller/Kocher Quintet at 3 p.m. and New World Order Jazzet at 5 p.m. For more festival information, call 656-6666.

W.B. Youththeatre

West Bloomfield Youththeatre announces the opening of its second production, "Alice in Wonderland, the Musical," featuring more than 120 performers, ages 5 to 15, 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday, July 22-24 and 2:30 p.m. Sunday, July 25, at West Bloomfield High School, Orchard Lake Road, north of Walnut Lake Road. Tickets \$5 for adults, \$3.50 for students and seniors, available at the door. For information, call (800) 824-8314.

Musical revue

The Jewish Community Center and Children's Entertainment Company will present "The Wizard of Oz Revue" a musical salute to one of the greatest films ever made 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays, July 23 and Aug. 4 at the Jewish Community Center, DeRoy Theatre, 6600 W. Maple, West Bloomfield. Tickets, \$4. For information, call 661-1000, Ext. 293.

Classical Bells

Classical Bells will present a handbell program 7:30 p.m. Monday, Aug. 2, at Rosegard Gardens Presbyterian Church, 9001 Hubbard, Livonia to benefit First Step, a shelter for abused women and children. There will be no admission charge, but donations to First Step will be accepted. For more information, call 425-2031 or 425-7861.

Classic tale

Smephter Productions, a nonprofit, local professional touring company will be presenting "The Adventures of the Ugly Duckling," 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. Saturdays, and 2 p.m. Sundays through Aug. 8 at Trinity House Theatre, 38840 W. Six Mile, Livonia. Tickets \$15 adults, \$4 children. For information, call 615-0414.

Costumes enhance 'Charlotte's Web'



Shirley Fager's costumes turn children performing in the Stagecrafters' Youth Theatre production of "Charlotte's Web," into realistic spiders, rats and other creatures. Find out how she did it.

By SANDRA DALKA-PRYSBY
SPECIAL WRITER

Each summer youth theater directors spend countless hours turning hundreds of children into actresses and actors.

Barbara Lyon, of Bloomfield Hills, director of the Royal Oak Stagecrafters Youth Theatre, had an added challenge this year. She also needed to turn most of the cast of "Charlotte's Web" into animals and other creatures.

Lyon sought the assistance of experienced costumer Shirley Fager, also of Stagecrafters, and the result is realistic pigs, sheep, geese, a lamb, owl, and a rat. The biggest challenge, according to Fager, was "Charlotte."

The lead of this musical adaptation of the popular children's story is a spider, played by 11-year-old Melissa Harrison of Livonia.

"After checking pictures, and books on spiders, I made sketches of the type of eight-legged creature I wanted to create. It had to be a creepy spider, so I came up with the idea of using a black satin tuxedo jacket as the basis for the costume," said Fager. "Then I sewed it, stuffed it, pushed it and showed it to get it into the shape I wanted. Once I was satisfied with the body, I made stuffed satin legs with wire down the center."

Fager's work with arachnids wasn't finished with the completion of the "Charlotte" costume. She made three more spider outfits for the babies.

Fager uses a number of sources for inspiration when creating costumes,

"CHARLOTTE'S WEB"
Theater: Stagecrafters' Youth Theatre production at the Baldwin Theatre, 415 S. Lafayette, Royal Oak.
Curtain time: Shows 7 p.m. Thursday, July 22, 7 p.m. Friday, July 23, 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Saturday, July 24 and 2 p.m. Sunday, July 25.
Tickets: Are \$4 per person available at the theater box office. All seats reserved. For information, call 541-6430.



Realistic costumes: Melissa Harrison (left), Mike Kopera, Megan Kapera and Libby Prysby show off the costumes they wear in the Stagecrafters' Youth Theatre production of "Charlotte's Web."

PREVIEW

she said. A children's book, "My Little Book of Farm Animals," was one of her best aids for creating the animal costumes for "Charlotte's Web." She turned to a bisque figurine of an owl to create another of the creatures in the production.

"I not only want the costumes to look realistic, but I want the kids to feel good in them. I will add something here and there, or remove something to accomplish these goals."

Libby Prysby of Birmingham appreciates how accommodating Fager is to the children's concerns. "I felt uncomfortable in the dress I wear in the country area because it is low cut in back," said the 12-year-old. "Mrs. Fager added a big red bow to eliminate the problem."

Another thankful cast member is 10-year-old Mike Kopera of Troy,

who plays Templeton, a rat. Instead of having to wear a full costume of fur, which would be uncomfortable and hot, Fager made him a lightweight body suit with fur pieces added to the hood and the leggings. He also wears a tunic made of fur-like fabric.

"Even though our rat isn't exactly like the real thing, Templeton looks quite natural, only meaner and rattier," Fager said.

Fager, who has been making costumes for 18 years, she began by making Halloween costumes for her children, is responsible for outfitting all 30 members of the "Charlotte's Web" cast, which includes Megan and

Stephanie Kapera of West Bloomfield and Steve Rundell of Troy.

"I never stick to a pattern because I usually can't get the size I need or the look I want to achieve with a ready-made pattern and the leggings. For example, this production calls for a bat, played by Michelle Perez, 16, of Troy.

"The only pattern I could find in the stores was for Batman, and that would never do. I have to design costumes based on the director's wants and needs."

According to Lyon, she couldn't be more pleased with the costumes. "Shirley's vision and mine have been right in sync. The costumes truly enhance the overall performance."

Villain hilarious in musical melodrama



SALLY DUBATS

broads range comedy and audience participation, but the Troy Players do not use this device to their advantage.

Director Roseanna Scobie neglects to tell her actors to have fun with this device as well. Prior to the show, Scobie instructs the audience to boo, hiss, cheer, or throw popcorn at the actors (standard melodrama plays), and this is part of the show when repeated by an actor at the show's beginning.

But as the audience does what they are told, the actors don't "play" with this device. As paper hits an actor, rather than sneer at the audience, he forgets his lines.

"THE SALOONKEEPER'S DAUGHTER"
Theater: Troy Players at the Troy Community Theatre, 520 West Big Beaver Road, Troy.
Curtain time: Shows 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, July 23-24, 2 p.m. Sunday, July 25.
Tickets: Call 979-1255

REVIEW

Accessories to "The Saloonkeeper's Daughter," set in the Old West, include an evil villain named Manny Raach, played moderately well by Joseph LoGiudice (the evil villain) has contorted his face into hilarious configurations in past shows, and is funny in this show. Regrettably (with the exception of one song, none of which are listed in the program), the director does not use LoGiudice's funny-face talent to its fullest in this production when broad comedic styling is needed most.

Donna Kussad as Seedy Shlepper does use her face to its fullest with crossed eyes and a funny goofy stare, and always stays in character. The Saloonkeeper, Red Whiter is played by Bill Hellebuyck (who stepped into rehearsals during the last week). Hellebuyck is functional as Red White, and likable.

Lily White, the title actress, is played with a mere modicum of effort by Stephanie Garza. Garza never implements standard melodrama gags to illuminate her character's humor. Corisa Lesner as Charity Kindly, the

parson's daughter, also falls in this respect.

Bob Zawidch and Robert Tome as Blacky White and Rusty Witta give hum-drum performances as well.

Melodrama music is not noted for its originality nor listening pleasure, but is just a backdrop for fun and theatrical frivolity and harmlessly pokes fun at the music industry as a whole. Music director Margaret Wunsch doesn't make the most of this device, but rather allows the singers to sing on as if these were ordinary songs.

"Troy Players' production of "The Saloonkeeper's Daughter" was produced with limited knowledge of true melodrama, notwithstanding blocking problems and pace problems due to missed lines cues and lack of preparedness.

Sally Dubats of Madison Heights is 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.

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