

JET opens season with delightful play



CATHIE BREIDENBACH

Wendy Wasserstein's "Isn't It Romantic" is not a romantic comedy. It's not a traditional boy meets girl, and after some silly confusion, they live happily ever after comedy.

Wasserstein delivers instead a timely, delightfully funny play about the dilemmas of modern, single women who want it all—love, career, and independence. Thankfully, Wasserstein offers no panaceas or pretty women fairy tales.

The Jewish Ensemble Theatre's well-paced production takes advantage of a superb supporting cast every bit as accomplished as the leads—Marilyn Mays as Janie Blumberg and Maureen McDevitt as her best friend, Harriet Cornwell. The two bright, Ivy League educated young women have just returned to New York to launch their futures.

They're a study in contrasts. Janie, a free lance writer of dialogue for Sesame Street's Big Bird, sports grungy sweat shirts,

"Isn't It Romantic"
Theater: Jewish Ensemble Theatre, at the Aaron DeRoy Theatre, Jewish Community Center
6600 W. Maple Road, West Bloomfield

Curtain time: 8:45 p.m. Saturdays, Sept. 18, 25, and Oct. 2; 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Sundays, Sept.

19, 26, and Oct. 3; 8 p.m. Wednesdays, Sept. 22; 8 p.m. Thursdays, Sept. 23; 8 p.m. Mondays, Sept. 27; 8 p.m. Tuesdays, Sept. 28.
Tickets: Range from \$12 to \$19.50. Senior citizen and student discounts available. Call JET: 768-2900 weekdays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. or Ticketmaster, 645-6666.

REVIEW

downy country-cousin hats that Annie Hall might have picked up at the thrift shop after Minnie Pearl tired of them, and an oddball sense of humor. She can't find a steady job, but does find a man, Marty Silver, a nice Jewish kidney specialist who wants to set up housekeeping with her in Brooklyn.

Her svelte, sophisticated friend Harriet lands a fast-track executive job with Colgate Palmolive, but hooks up with Paul, a "andie vice president" who leaves her every night to hurry home to his wife. Add to this complicated romantic foursome an array of rich-

ly eccentric supporting characters like Harriet's cool executive mother (Henrietta Hermelin-Weinberg) and Janie's interfering parents (Evelyn Orbach and Peter Bellanca) who even show up at her door with an immigrant Russian cab driver (Marshall Zewel). The cablo's mastery of English begins and ends with "Hello, Hi." Yet, in desperation to see her happy (translation: married) to a nice Jewish boy, Janie's parents propose this inarticulate Romeo as a possible date for their daughter.

Director Gordon Reinhardt keeps in perfect balance this melange of eccentric characters vying for laughs. As Janie's mother Tasha says, "I believe a person should have a little origi-

nality." "Isn't It Romantic" abounds with people who have more than a little originality. Thanks to costume designer Edith Leavis Bookstein's wry sense of Janie's anti-fashion style, Janie's outfits deliver laughs of their own.

Touches like her Annie Hall hats, ruffled little girl anklets worn with flats, high top red toenails, and her writing outfit (earmuffs and mittens with holes for her typing index fingers, accentuate Janie's whimsical humor.

The play begins with the bane of modern life—the answering machine. Janie listens to messages on her machine and twists her expressive face into half a dozen hilarious grimaces before she says a single word. Marilyn Mays as frumpy Janie combines the childlike teddy bear hugging vulnerability of a person who hasn't unpacked boxes in her living room three months after she moved in, with the integrity of a grown woman willing to make hard choices like should she marry nice Dr. Silver, learn to cook a chicken, and move to Brooklyn.

Maureen McDevitt plays a fine



Delightful comedy: Maureen McDevitt, Michael Quimet and Marilyn Mays in a scene from the Jewish Ensemble Theatre production of "Isn't It Romantic?"

Yuppie Gentle, straight woman as a foil for Janie's idiosyncratic Jewish funny woman. Evelyn Orbach, Artistic Director for the Jewish Ensemble Theatre, shines as energetic Tasha, Janie's hyperactive mother who rollerblades to dancing class and sings "Sunrise Sunset" on her daughter's answering machine.

smooth opportunistic lover, Paul, and Michael Quimet as Dr. Marty Silver round out the exceptional cast in this honest, touching, and delightfully funny play.

Cathie Breidenbach of West Bloomfield teaches college writing classes and works as a free lance writer.

UPCOMING THINGS TO DO

Deadline for the Upcoming entertainment calendar is three weeks ahead of publication. Send items to be considered for publication to: Keely Wygonik, Entertainment editor, The Observer & Economic News, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150. Our fax number is 591-7279.

AUDITIONS

BEL CANTO
Bel Canto Choral Society is holding auditions for women who read music and enjoy singing. Call Doris August, 851-6714 to arrange an audition.

DETROIT ORATORIO SOCIETY
Detroit Oratorio Society, a classic choral ensemble will hold auditions Monday, Sept. 27. Call 573-9779 for information.

TUESDAY MUSICALS
The Women's Chorus of Tuesday Musicals of Pontine will begin rehearsals 9:30 a.m. Wednesday, Sept. 22, at Central United Methodist Church, 3882 Highland Road, Waterford. Call 332-4975 for information.

THEATER

FISHER THEATRE
"Evita" continues through Sun-

day, Oct. 3 at the Fisher Theatre in Detroit. Call Ticketmaster, 645-6666. For information, call 872-1000.

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY
"Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Sept. 24-25 in the Varner Recital Hall on the Oakland University campus in Rochester. Call 370-3013 for ticket information.

MARQUIS THEATRE
Marquis Light Opera, will make its official stage debut 8 p.m. Friday, Oct. 1, in "An Evening With Gilbert and Sullivan," at the Marquis Theatre, 135 E. Main Street, Northville. Call 349-8100 for show times, ticket information.

ATTIC THEATRE
"Pump Boys and Dinettes" at the Strand Theatre, 12 N. Saginaw, Pontiac, through Oct. 10. Call 335-8100 or Ticketmaster, 645-6666 for times and tickets.

STAGECRAFTERS
"Guys and Dolls" 8 p.m. Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays; 2 p.m. Sundays, beginning 8 p.m. Friday, Sept. 17, at the Baldwin Theatre, 415 South Lafayette, Royal Oak. Call 541-6430, 7-9

p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Fridays for tickets.

CONCERTS

DSO
Season opens 8 p.m. Friday, Sept. 17 at Orchestra Hall in Detroit. Concerts 8:30 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 18, 3:30 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 19. Call 833-3700 for concert information or Ticketmaster, 645-6666.

L50
The Livonia Symphony Orchestra will present its first concert 8 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 2, at the James Earl Auditorium of Church Hill High School, Newburgh at Joy Road in Livonia. Tickets \$12, seniors, age 62 and older, \$8, students with identification, 12 and older, \$6, children under 12, \$3. Call 421-1111 or 464-2741 for information.

DETROIT CHAMBER WINDS
The Figueroa Trio will present a recital 8 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 22, at the Lila Jones-Johnson Theatre, on the Royal Oak cam-

pus of Oakland Community College, at the corner of Main Street and Lincoln in Royal Oak. Tickets \$15, students and seniors \$10. Call 362-2622.

LYRIC CHAMBER ENSEMBLE
"Northern Exposure," a concert celebrating the 150th birthday of composer Edward Grieg, 3:30 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 26, in the Grospe Pointe War Memorial ballroom, 32 Lake Shore Road, Grospe Pointe Farms. Tickets \$16 adults, \$14 students and seniors. Call 367-1111.

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GENITTI'S HOLE-IN-THE WALL
"The Soap Opera Murders," continue 7 p.m. Fridays, 6:30 p.m. Saturdays, at Genitti's Hole-in-the Wall, 108 E. Main, Northville. Call 349-0522.

ALLEN PARK MOTOR LODGE
"Nurse Jane Goes to Hawaii" featuring David Howell of Redford, 7 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, through Oct. 23, at the Allen Park Motor Lodge, 14497 South-

field, Allen Park. Tickets \$19.95 per person includes dinner, show, tax and coffee or tea. Show only \$10. Call 386-6900 for reservations, 562-3865 for information.

FOLK

GEMINI
Geminis, twin brother musicians Sander and Laszlo Slomovits will present a musical celebration for children and the family, 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 18, at Huron Civic Auditorium, 3204 Huron River Drive, New Boston. Call 782-5390 for ticket information.

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