

'Steel Magnolias' beauty of a show



BARBARA MICHAELS
Capturing all of the bitter-sweet emotions of "Steel Magnolias," the current St. Dunstan Theatre Guild production is extraordinarily well-acted and directed. Robert Harling's comedy-drama takes place in a small-town Louisiana beauty shop. The Saturday morning "regulars" visit for more than just a new hairdo; they share their joys and sorrows, and offer each other support. Under the direction of Edgar A. Guest, each of the six-woman cast gives a strong character study. The actresses also do a remarkably consistent job with their Southern accents. Comic timing and overall pacing are very good throughout. Truzy (Elizabeth Brooks), the

"STEEL MAGNOLIAS"
Theater: St. Dunstan's Guild of Cranbrook, 400 Lone Pine Road, two miles west of Woodward, Bloomfield Hills. Curtain time: 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Nov. 6-6. Tickets: \$10 general, \$8 students and seniors, call 644-0927.

owner of the shop, is a buoyant personality, full of good cheer and homespun wisdom. Her motto is "there's no such thing as a natural beauty." With her children grown, and her spouse a confirmed couch potato, Truzy assures her loneliness by "adopting" her new employee Annelle (Julie Yoelis).

The shy and awkward Annelle is in emotional turmoil, not sure if she is even legally married to the man who has just deserted her. With Truzy's encouragement

REVIEW

Annelle gains poise and sheds her ugly duckling image.

Nancy Brassert gives a powerful performance as M'Lynn, the magnolia whose steel is most severely tested. Married to an eccentric who terrifies the neighborhood and the mother of a headstrong daughter with diabetes, M'Lynn maintains her cheerful facade even when she is worried sick.

As Shelby, M'Lynn's willful daughter, Laura Jerrill is convincing and likeable. An irrefragable optimist, Shelby insists on taking risks with her delicate health because she'd "rather have a half-hour of wonderful than a lifetime of nothing special."

Chlaire (Sally Garrison), widow of the late mayor, finds herself adrift, her life suddenly barren of

the many social obligations she enjoyed. On a suggestion from Shelby, she seizes an opportunity to begin a new career and give her life purpose again. Garrison shows a smooth comic flair in her character's self-deprecating remarks.

Fran Hayes is absolute perfection as Ouiser, the local curmudgeon. Her superb facial expressions, timing and sardonic delivery add bite to the comedy.

Bill Everson's realistic set works well, and under the tutelage of hair consultant Joah Dawson the ladies' hair really does get washed and set on stage.

The women of "Steel Magnolias" speculate on what men most think goes on in a beauty shop. The answer is a lot of bonding, camaraderie, and shoring up of flagging spirits.

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

Marquee from page 2C

The recital is followed by a reception in the Oak Room where patrons meet the artist. For ticket information, call 761-2435.

Jeanette Karamedjian of Orchard Lake and other members of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra Hall Volunteer Council are busy planning a Gala Benefit featuring world-renowned soprano Dame Kiri Te Kanawa on Thursday, Nov. 18. Tickets for the gala range in price from \$50 for benefactors to \$150 for donors. Concert tickets are \$60 for main floor or \$100 for box seating. Call 962-1200 to make reservations.

The evening will begin at 6 p.m. with dinner at the Whitney. After dinner guests will be transported to Orchestra Hall

for the concert. At 8 p.m., the DSO will perform with legendary artist Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, New Zealand born, internationally-acclaimed star of the operatic world, as a soloist. This will be her only performance in Detroit. After the concert, transportation will be provided to a lavish afterglow at the Whitney where Dame Kiri will be present.

Keely Wygonik is editor of the Taste and Entertainment sections of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. She welcomes your calls and comments. Call 953-2105, fax 951-7279, or write: Observer & Eccentric Newspapers Inc. 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150.

Fine showmanship in 'Annie Get Your Gun'



CATHIE BREIDENBACH

"ANNIE GET YOUR GUN"
Theater: Bloomfield Players at the Lahser High School theater, 3456 Lahser Road, Bloomfield Hills. Curtain times 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Nov. 5-6; 2 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 7. Tickets: Adults \$8, students and seniors age 60 and older, \$7. Call 433-0885.

Songs as good as "There's No Business Like Show Business," "Falling in Love is Wonderful," "The Girl that I Marry," and "Anything You Can Do I Can Do Better" take on a life of their own outside the musical that gave them birth. And any musical that spawned so many wonderful songs deserves a revival. The Bloomfield Players' revival of "Annie Get Your Gun" is feisty and fine, filled with Irving Berlin's marvelous music and the superb singing of leads Judy Zorn and Paul Beck.

Besides the fine music, the Bloomfield Players under the direction of R. Dean Acheson, fill the Lahser High School stage with all the spectacle of cowboys in buckskins, Indians dancing, and shooting contests. When the Bloomfield Players say they have real live Indians, it's not Wild West Show hype. They really do have Reg Pettibone, a champion Winnebago Indian dancer and his company. One very tiny American Indian girl steals the limelight from the group-ups despite their full feathered regalia.

Annie of the title is, of course, the legendary Annie Oakley, a sharpshooter from Ohio who joined Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show and became an international star because she could trick shoot and knock off clay pigeons better than any man she challenged.

Judy Zorn plays Annie as tough and spunky with a tender heart. Zorn can belt out a song like "You Can't Get a Man with a Gun" but can also sing a lyric duet like "Falling in Love" in a pure and melting soprano.

After one took into his handsome blue eyes, Annie falls in love with Frank Butler, the famous sharpshooter who likes his women to wear pink satin and have soft submissive personalities to match their ladylike clothes. Annie doesn't meet his specifications for a wife; she's a strong, opinionated, modern woman and what wounds Frank's ego most she's a better shot than he is.

Paul Beck plays a fine Frank Butler who may have been a hero in the old West, but doesn't qualify as a 1990s hero because he can't accept a woman as his equal. And Annie also loses points as role model for the 1990s because she stoops to hiding her talents to win her man. Annie and Frank are backed by an energetic community cast of over fifty led by young players Luke W. Capizzo as Little Jake, Elizabeth Hawley as Nellie, Allison

S. Brown as Jessie, and Alyssa Scheffman as Minnie. W. Gerald McCray plays a robust Bill Cody, Donna Kussand, a middleclass Dolly Tuto, Gary Quick, a believable Pawnee Bill, Alan C. Jablin is Charlie Davenport, and Mark Bello is Chief Sitting Bull.

Aside from a few city slicker cowboys whose whips won't crack and look more like lethargic ribbons than rawhide, the Bloomfield Players' "Annie Get Your Gun" presents the story of a heroine of the old West with energy and fine showmanship.

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

CLASSICS

Classicalists upcoming classical music concerts. Send items to be considered for publication to Keely Wygonik, Entertainment editor, The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150. Our fax number is 591-7279.

COLLEGE

■ OAKLAND UNIVERSITY
Concert band performs 8 p.m. Friday, Nov. 5 in Varner Recital Hall. Call 370-3013.

SCHOOLCRAFT COLLEGE

Music Club presents mezzo soprano Lauren Wagner, noon to 1 p.m., Wednesday, Nov. 10 in the Forum Building Recital Hall, F. 530. The concert is free an open to the public. Verdi Opera Theatre Night, 8 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 20 in the liberal arts theater on campus, 18600 Haggerty, Livonia. Show tunes, light opera, wine and cheese afterglow. Tickets \$25 per person, call 462-4417.

BENEFITS

■ PIANIST
Troy Community Coalition presents pianist Laura Spitzer in a benefit concert for the prevention of drug and alcohol abuse, 7 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 14 at The Somerset Collection Rotunda, Big Beaver at Coolidge, Troy. Admission includes afterglow of international coffees and desserts. Tickets \$20 per person, patron tickets \$50 per person. Call 740-0431.

RECITALS

■ DETROIT MUSICIANS LEAGUE
Adult recital 2:30 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 14 at Hammell's Steinway Hall, 15630 Middlebelt, Livonia. Twelve pianists and one singer will participate. There is no admission charge. Pianist Dady Mehta will present a master class 10 a.m. Monday, Nov. 22 at Evola Music in Bloomfield Hills. Call 689-3469.

COMMUNITY

■ BBSO
Birmingham-Bloomfield Symphony, "Inside the BBSO" 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 14 at Temple Beth El, 14 Mile at Telegraph, Birmingham. Call 645-BBSO for tickets.

■ RACKHAM SYMPHONY CHOIR
Joannes Brahms' "A German Requiem" will be presented by the 85-voice Rackham Symphony Choir directed by G. Kevin Dewey of Farmington Hills, 2 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 7 in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, 9844 Woodward, Detroit. Tickets \$10, call 885-8692.

■ PLYMOUTH SYMPHONY
"An Orchestra Safari" 3 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 14 at Novi High School. Call 451-2112 for tickets.

SERIES

■ CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK
Evensong for All Saints to be pre-

sented by the 45-voice parish choir 5 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 7 at the church on the corner of Cranbrook and Lone Pine roads in Bloomfield Hills. The public is welcome. Call 644-5210 for information.

■ VIVACE
Mezzo soprano Irina Lekhtman at Birmingham Temple, 28811 West 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills, 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 14. Pianist Zina Astrakhan will accompany her. Call 647-4692 or 644-8350.

■ CONCERTS IN THE GARDEN
Ervin Monroe and Patty Maerri-Fletcher of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra who recently recorded "After a Dream," featuring melodies from opera and ballet perform in Southfield's Concerts in the Garden Series, Sunday, Nov. 14. Continental breakfast served 10:30 a.m. followed by concert at 11 a.m. at the Prudential Town Center, 2000 building. Call 354-4717 for tickets.

Birmingham Musicale hosts dinner theater

The Birmingham Musicale is sponsoring a dinner theater performance of "On the Town" on November 6 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 13, at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, 1800 W. Maple, Birmingham.

Tickets \$25 per person, includes dinner at the theater; patron tickets \$40. All proceeds go to the Wings & A Prayer Players directed by Pam Dundas and music by Joan Bowers.

This musical comedic spoof of the fairy tale, "The Princess and the Pea" will be performed by the Wings & A Prayer Players directed by Pam Dundas and music by Joan Bowers.

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