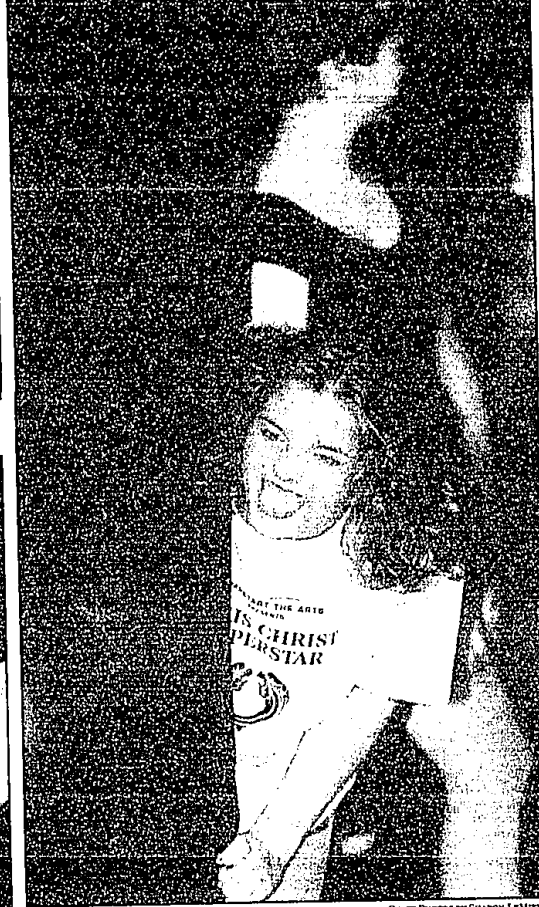




He's a Music Man: Elementary school-age children surround the Music Man during a rehearsal at North Farmington High School.



It's the berries: From behind a curtain, North Farmington Junior Jamie Earls playfully shoots "raspberries" to her boyfriend, Matt Whitten. Jamie and other dancers were waiting for a cue at rehearsal.

STAFF PHOTOS BY SHARON LEMBERT

Music

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Becci and Laurie play townspeople in "The Music Man." Tom plays baritone in the kids band. Joe Szafranski has the role of Olin Britt, a bass vocalist in a barbershop quartet.

In addition to four-a-week rehearsals, the Szafranskis have taken to practicing around the house. They even bought the score to "The Music Man" and played it while traveling to South Dakota on their vacation.

For Esther, the chance to do theater is a sentimental journey. She appeared in the productions at Denby High, including "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum."

"It brings back memories of those high school days," Esther said.

The Petruses are not lacking for stage experience, either.

Janet performed in the starring role of M'Lynn in the Dearborn Players Guild's production of "Steel Magnolias" while husband Michael had a role in his high school's presentation of "The Music Man."

Daughters Juliet (Zaneeta Shinn) and Jessica (Amaryllis) appreciate the company on stage.

"When you're rehearsing together, you can all relate to the characters much more," said Jessica, 11, who is a student at Power Middle School. "It's really interesting."

North Farmington's Sue Cobb coordinates the annual production with her husband, Dean. She's seeing more of a team approach as more families take to the stage.

The school and community theater group was started to get more people involved in the Farmington district.

Last year's production of "Anything Goes" included two sold-out performances and another one near capacity. "Oklahoma" was the group's inaugural effort three years ago.

Then, cast members were few. This year, there are 79 people with 22 of those elementary-age children.

"It's a nice environment," Sue Cobb said. "The two families I'm thinking of are very musically



A real leader: Duane Fox, a Farmington Hills police officer, plays the lead in "The Music Man," and his daughter, Erin, 11, is also in the production.

■ "My husband and little boy were left out last year. So this year we decided we would all try out. It's enjoyable to have everyone involved in it. It's a family-type adventure."

Esther Szafranski

inclined and they are such nice, nice people."

People tend to show up on time when families are involved, and Cobb said, "The kids tend to behave when the parents are around."

Fathers and sons and mothers and daughters can also share in the pre-curtain-raising butter-

flies that accompany any theater effort. The cast has been rehearsing for six weeks.

"I'm anxious to get it done with," Jessica said. "I've never been in any community show here in Farmington. We've been at it for five weeks, I think we will be ready."

"I hope we will be ready."



Directing it: Dean Cobb directs "The Music Man" at North Farmington. His wife Sue is smiling at his side. This is the third year in a row for a communitywide production.

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