

SPECIAL EVENTS

Clothes help set scene in 'Miss Saigon'

"Miss Saigon" plays at the Masonic Temple Theatre in Detroit through July 27. Tickets range from \$16 to \$60, call the Masonic Temple Theatre box office, (313) 832-2232 or Ticketmaster (810) 645-6666.

BY KELLY WYONIK
STAFF WRITER

Back stage, Ricky Kelly, wardrobe supervisor for "Miss Saigon," opening Friday at the Masonic Temple Theatre, has his hands full. There are 43 people in the cast, and 450 costumes in the show. "The challenge is training the 13 dressers who will help the cast," said Kelly whose first professional job was dressing Raphael, the Teenage Mutant

Ninja Turtle or their national rock concert tour. "We don't treat them like they're just swinging clothes around. We want them to feel like they're part of the show."

"Miss Saigon," which plays at the Masonic through July 27, is the newest musical by Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schonberg, the creators of "Les Misérables." Music for "Miss Saigon" is by Schonberg, with lyrics by Boublil and Richard Malby Jr., adapted from the original French lyrics by Boublil.

"Miss Saigon" tells a story of love and self-sacrifice between a young Vietnamese girl and an American soldier at the time of

PREVIEW

the fall of Saigon in 1975. The costumes help set the scene making what the cast does on stage more believable.

Attention to detail, and an effort to be as authentic as possible with costumes, are some of the things that make "Miss Saigon" a blockbuster musical.

Originally, the island's cast were made from the threads of old car tires, and the traps were made from bike tubes, just like they were in Vietnam. But they didn't hold up, so we had to come up with an alter-

native that looked authentic," explained Kelly.

The Vietnamese wedding dress worn at a small wedding in one of the scenes was made by a Vietnamese dressmaker. The civilian clothes, circa 1970s, including Polyester bell bottoms, were found in a warehouse in New York. "They were brand new," exclaimed Kelly.

Dressers need to understand what the show is all about so they won't mistakenly mend clothes that are supposed to look tattered. For example, after Saigon falls, the people are in hiding, and their clothes reflect

their anguish. "It's important that the dressers know that peasant clothing is supposed to be dirty and ripped."

Clothes help the audience distinguish between tourists, vendors, and a gang of hustlers in a scene that takes place in Bangkok's Red Light District in the 1970s. They help define the difference between North and

South Vietnamese soldiers too.

"The costumes really help classify people in the show," explains Kelly. "It adds another dimension. It's subtle, but makes a bold statement without knocking you over the head."

Look for Hugh Gallagher's review of "Miss Saigon" next Thursday in Arts & Entertainment.

New opera house expands repertoire

The new Detroit Opera House will include performances of opera, dance, musical theater, variety shows and special events in their 1996-97 season.

In collaboration with the Nederlander Family, which leased the Birmingham Theatre until 1994, and Olympia Entertainment, the Detroit Opera House, under the management of Michigan Opera Theatre, will host nearly two hundred performances in the upcoming season.

"We are delighted that the Detroit Opera House will play such a significant role in further enhancing the wide array of programming for southeastern Michigan," said Michigan Opera Theatre founder and general director David DiChiera. "In addition to opera, the theater will now play host to grand-scale international touring productions of dance and musical theater, as well as variety of programs and special events."

For the past few seasons, Michigan Opera Theatre has presented a ballet production as

part of its opera series. With the expanded resources of the Detroit Opera House, the company will soon announce a new season devoted exclusively to dance.

Additionally, Dr. DiChiera announced that the Detroit Opera House has entered into a collaboration with Detroit's two principal presenting organizations, the Nederlander Family and Olympia Entertainment, in which all three entities will work together to provide the Detroit Opera House with an exciting series of musical theater and variety presentations.

The Nederlander Family will maintain its relationship with Michigan Opera Theatre by presenting the finest in Broadway musicals at the newly restored Detroit Opera House. In addition, the Nederlanders continue to present full programs at the Fisher and Masonic Temple theaters.

"We believe it is vital to support Michigan Opera Theatre, and we look forward to continu-

ing an association that began many years ago," said Harry Nederlander, one of the founding members of Michigan Opera Theatre.

The Nederlander Family's seventy-five years of commitment to the city of Detroit is reflected in the excellence of countless award-winning Broadway shows presented to metro Detroiters.

Olympia Entertainment, owned by Michael and Marian Hlitch, locally operates Detroit's Fox Theatre, Joe Louis Arena, Cobo Arena, and The Second City-Detroit sports and entertainment facilities.

The Detroit Opera House opened last April after a \$27 million renovation by Michigan Opera Theatre. The theater features a seating capacity of up to 2,900, configured into orchestra seating, grand tier boxes (15 private boxes), mezzanine and balcony seating. The theater also boasts a 75,000 square foot stage house and an orchestra pit with a capacity for nearly 100 musicians. The Detroit Opera House

was renovated by Michigan Opera Theatre to accommodate the company's need to present grand-scale productions of opera and ballet.

The opera season starts with "Carmen" in October. Call (313) 874-SING for season ticket information.

Stay tuned to Arts & Entertainment for information about other offerings at the opera house.

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Detroit Tap Festival features legendary Clayton 'Peg Leg' Bates

The second annual Detroit Tap Festival, featuring performances by several nationally known headliners in honor of tap legend Clayton "Peg Leg" Bates, will be June 28-30 in the Millennium Theatre Center, 16600 J.L. Hudson Drive, Southfield, Call (810) 414-7170 for information.

Visiting artists who will be performing 4 p.m. Sunday, June

30 include James "Buster Brown," LaVaughn Robinson, Harriet Browne, Robert L. Reed, Lane Alexander, Rusty E. Frank, Karen Callaway and Steppin' Out. Tickets are \$20 per person.

Workshops and master classes will be given June 28-29 at the Southfield Centre for the Arts, 24360 Southfield Road.

The June 29 show will end in a

jam session and a panel discussion in which Clayton Bates will participate in.

The discussion will be facilitated by Rusty Frank, the author of "Tap... The Great Tap Dance Stars and their Stories." Workshops are \$25 per session or \$100 for all six sessions.

Call number listed above for details.

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