



St. Dunstan's Theatre Guild of Cranbrook's Children's Theatre presents "My Name is Rumpelstiltskin" to benefit Make-A-Wish Foundation of Michigan, 400 Lone Pine Road, West Bloomfield. Tickets \$6, call (810) 644-0527 for tickets/additional show times.

SATURDAY



Five unmarried sisters share a home in Ireland in 1936 in Ridgedale Players' production of Brian Friel's heartwarming "Dancing at Lughnasa," 205 W. Long Lake Road, (between Crooks & Livernois), Troy. (810) 988-7049.

SUNDAY



Detroit Dance Collective celebrates the opening of its 17th season 3:30 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 17 at the Millennium Theatre Center, 15600 J.L. Hudson Dr., Southfield. The fund-raising event features performances by present and past company members, and honors Paula Kramer, founding co-artistic director, on her 60th birthday. Admission is by donation, call (810) 652-7000 for details.



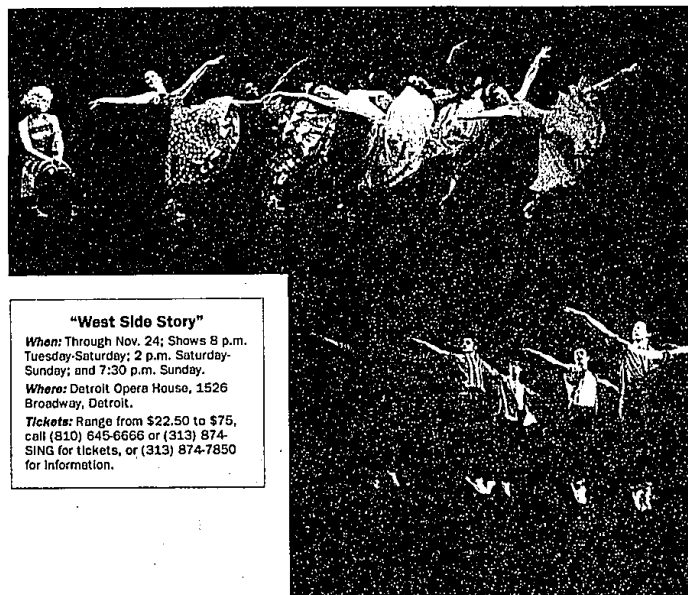
Hot Tix: The Detroit Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Pops Conductor Erich Kunzel, with a full chorus, which includes the Southfield Lathrup Madrigal Singers, shines the spotlight on the magical lyrics of Ira Gershwin in a "Centennial Tribute," 8 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 14; 8:30 p.m. Friday & Saturday, Nov. 15-16, and 3 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 17 at Orchestra Hall, Detroit, call (313) 833-3700.

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

WHAT TO DO, WHERE TO GO

KEELY WYGONIK, EDITOR • 313-953-2105

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 1996 • PAGE 1 SECTION E



Musical: The cast of "West Side Story" in the international touring production now playing at the Detroit Opera House.

"West Side Story"

When: Through Nov. 24; Shows 8 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday; 2 p.m. Saturday-Sunday; and 7:30 p.m. Sunday.

Where: Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway, Detroit.

Tickets: Range from \$22.50 to \$75, call (810) 645-6666 or (313) 874-SING for tickets, or (313) 874-7850 for information.

GETTING SET FOR

'West Side Story'

BY MARY JANE DOERR • SPECIAL WRITER

When the six semi-trucks pulled into the Detroit Opera House carrying the set for "West Side Story," house property master John Johnson, and the head electrician, Robert "Max" Mesinar were waiting to carefully unload the cargo.

"There is lots of automation in this show, which means lots of wires and lots of work for me," said Mesinar of Southfield, a 20-year veteran of Michigan Opera Theatre.

It took these two men, and some 25 others, 12 hours to set up the staging, a relatively short time compared to other shows that may take up to two weeks to install.

"This is an easy set," said Johnson, a 10-year veteran with the company who lives in Novi. "This is a road show and they moved so much they have it down to a system."

"West Side Story," based on Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet," set against the backdrop of gang warfare on the streets of New York City, is scheduled for a two-year tour to over 30 U.S. cities, Canada and Japan. The book by Arthur Laurents tells the story of star-crossed lovers whose romance ends in tragedy. The score written by composer Leonard Bernstein and lyricist Stephen Sondheim, features some of the most memorable songs from the Broadway stage.

including "Maria," "America," and "Tonight." Director Alan Johnson is reproducing Jerome Robbins' original direction, and Tony Award-winning choreography, which broke new ground for musical theater in the 1950s.

Mesinar and Johnson are two of the five full-time stage hands employed by Michigan Opera Theatre at the Detroit Opera House. Johnson learned his craft from his father, Roy Johnson Sr., who learned it from his father, Roy Johnson Sr., the head electrician at the Bonstelle Theatre in Detroit from 1926-35. Johnson's father worked backstage at the Fisher, Schubert, and Michigan Theaters.

"Being properties master means that I take care of a lot of knives and guns for this show, and make sure the floor is absolutely clean for the dancers," said Johnson.

Before each performance Johnson maps the stage with ammonium (soap makes streaks seen from the audience). "The house is still a construction site and there is lots of dirt backstage," said Johnson.

This is not his first "West Side Story." He ran the computer board for the lighting for the 1995 production.

"The computer is like a big calculator. All the lights are put on channels according to the

show's lighting design. You might have anywhere from 60 cues to 400 like we did in the 1981 'Magic Flute.'"

"We get our cues from the stage manager," said Mesinar. "Road shows bring their own stage manager."

"You can't make a mistake," said Johnson. "You have to do everything right."

Johnson recalled the horrible time when a helium balloon from a party at the Masonic Temple got caught in the ceiling and came down in the middle of the death scene in "Aida."

The job does have its drawbacks. The two may work over 100 hours a week when the house is being loaded and taken down. As properties master, sometimes Johnson gets stuck with unsightly messes like cleaning up the bloody head (corn syrup and red dye) of John the Baptist in "Salome."

Mesinar enjoys the extended family spirit backstage and meeting the celebrities. "I didn't recognize Favarotti when he first came in. When I heard him sing, I knew it was him."

Johnson said about MOT's managing director Dr. David DiChiera, "the best thing about the job is when the doctor comes backstage and says 'Thank-you.'"

EXHIBITION

Wood sculptures have life of their own

BY MARY KLEGG
STAFF WRITER

Barbara Cooper's sculptures in her current exhibit at The Sybaris Gallery in Royal Oak have a life of their own that appears in a variety of ways.

The works fascinate in the way they take up physical space - you admire their balance, their "poise" as well as their pose. They also appeal in a spiritual way - through them you ponder the place of life in the universe.

Cooper, who earned a master of fine arts degree in fiber from Cranbrook Academy of Art in 1977, "weaves" with unfinished wood veneer strips. The artist painstakingly layers these pieces, and they form a design that draws the eye over and around and through. The pattern is at the same time orderly and jagged like electricity. Some strips on the lips or underside are tinted another color, adding to their interest and energy.

The symmetric forms with their gentle curves seem to undulate in a fluid grace frozen just for the viewer. They have the fascination of a three-dimensional Mobius strip, without beginning or end.

In another suggestion of life, some resemble pods or cocoons, or mummy-

"Sonus" is like a circle folded and twisted on itself, perhaps a life form about to replicate and reproduce.

like wrappings. It is as if something is incubating within.

"Cylus" curves like the folds of an ear around a vortex. It looks as though it would spin like an acrobat. "Sonus" is like a circle folded and twisted on itself,

perhaps a life form about to replicate and reproduce.

"Aria" suggests different shapes. It could be a human body with arms thrown back, knees together, head down, a bird with wings spread; an animal head with long ears. The underside of the sections resembling arms, wings or ears is shaded gray. The shadows on the wall created by the work extend its presence.

"Ova" looks like two connected works. The resulting form could be a creature with long neck and gaping mouth thrusting itself into life; it could be a female body.

Also at Sybaris are sterling silver jewelry works by Heinz Brummel and Gina Pankowski. Brummel's pieces feature primary and secondary colors in lively, geometric shapes. Pankowski's pieces include interlocking elements.

The exhibits continue to Nov. 30 at 202 E. Third. Call (810) 544-3388.



'Sonus': Barbara Cooper's wood sculptures at The Sybaris Gallery, including this work, are full of life.