

## Show Boat from page E1

cord and aging. The songs are tightly related to the story and move it along. The Hammerstein-Kern score is arguably the best ever produced including such famous songs as "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man," "You Are Love," "Why Do I Love You," "Only Make Believe" and "Bill."

But above all these is perhaps the single most moving song in American theatrical history, "Ol Man River." In this song Hammerstein's lyrics brilliantly distilled the agony and the dignity of Southern blacks under the yoke of post Civil War oppression. Kern's music echoes black gospel music, while giving it a rich operatic range.

Harold Prince, the renowned director of numerous original musical hits, was attracted to doing a revival of "Show Boat" because he felt the best hadn't been achieved. Prince researched

every stage and film version of the show. He reinserted songs that had been dropped because they seemed too serious ("Misty's Comin' Aroun") and he also included songs added to later film and stage versions.

Prince also brought state-of-the-art stagecraft to the service of a show that moves through 40 years and from Natchez to Chicago.

"In the old days, musical theater was restricted to the need for 'in-one' shallow scenes in front of drops or curtains, while major scenery was changed onstage," Prince writes in his production notes. "Today, we can move more fluidly from full-stage set to full-stage set. We can employ motion picture techniques such as cross fades, dissolves and even close-ups."

During the dress rehearsal

**'Everybody says to stay back, The sets move and are very complicated. We're told to go to Ms. Bobbie (who supervises the children), but sometimes it's hard.'**

Sarah Wiercioch

Saturday, the dock workers moved bales of cotton as the Cotton Blossom, a huge showboat on a barge is pushed along the river by a paddleboat. It is an awesome display of stagecraft.

"Everybody says to stay back," said Sarah. "The sets move and are very complicated. We're told to go to Ms. Bobbie (who supervises the children), but sometimes it's hard. At the Marquis they use painted drops not the real thing."

The children are carefully supervised in the "Show Boat"

production. Posted on the board in the costume room are the "Cool Rules": 1. No hitting; 2. Talk nice; 3. Play nice; 4. Listen; 5. Stay close to Ms. Bobbie; 6. Be ready; 7. Be on time; 8. No running; 9. Home work is first; 10. Now means Now."

Sarah has two favorite scenes. One is a serious scene with Ravenal in which she has lines. But it's the other scene that she really likes.

"One of my favorite scenes, where I don't have lines is a montage 2 (linking scenes) show passage of time. I have a



STAFF PHOTO BY JIM JACOBSON

**Budding star:** Sarah Wiercioch loves to perform.

lollipop in my hand and I stick it on a guy's hand and it sticks."

Sarah and Jackie Olecko have been car pooling and treating each other to lunch. The big plans for after the rehearsal were either Wendy's or Big Boy.

## Marathon from page E1

Nahant point to the success of a recent all-day, sold-out short play presentation in New York. That event featured many of the country's most recognized playwrights, including August Wilson, Christopher Durang and Terry McNally. The New York fund-raiser was held after the playwrights' group found itself without a home after the financial demise of the Circle Rep Theatre.

While remaining financially

viable, Heartlands shares a mission with the Circle Rep, once thought of as the premier laboratory for innovative playwrights and actors. Heartlands has its right set on becoming a more visible producing theatre company that fosters Michigan playwrights. Currently, said Radcliff, the group offers a three-year program intended to encourage local talent.

"Writers here are responding to important issues facing our com-

munities," she said. "We want to nurture their development."

While many theatre companies struggle financially, or lack a strong artistic vision, Heartlands has sustained a determined path since it was founded in 1980.

"We're a company without a regular (theatre) space, so we know that our success depends on managing logistics," said Radcliff. "We think of it as an art to planning."

Initially organized by a group of actors who studied with legendary thespian Uta Hagen, Heartlands has grown into an award-winning producing theatre company. Three years ago, Heartlands' production of "A Piece of My Heart" won critical and popular acclaim. Over the years, Heartlands has also sponsored acting workshops with Hagen as the guest artist.

In 1994, Heartlands established "Playscape," an annual summer theatre festival of new plays and workshops. Last year's festival was held at the spacious Meadow Brook Theatre, an in-kind contribution from Oakland University that Radcliff estimates at \$25,000. Unfortunately, renovations at the theatre has forced Heartlands to look for another venue. To date, they've yet to settle on a location for this summer's festival.

Proceeds from "Play By Play" will go toward producing plays, workshops and the annual festival.

"Important theatre is happening in regional theaters throughout the country," she said. "We're hoping the people realize that and we get a big turn out."

Then, in a gesture of sheer honesty, Radcliff crossed her fingers and looked to the heavens for assurance.

## Romantic operetta, oratio showcase works by inventive composers

BY FRANK PROVENZANO  
STAFF WRITER

Works of two of the 20th century's most inventive and passionate composers will be performed this week.

Musica Viva International Concerts presents the North American stage premier of

Heitor Villa-Lobos' "Magdalena" on Friday at the Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills. Meanwhile, Arthur Honegger's "King David," a dramatic oratio, will be performed by the Rackham Symphony Choir on Sunday at Congregation Shaarey Zedek in Southfield.

Called the "musical voice of Brazil," the prolific Villa-Lobos composed an uneven collection of more than 2,000 works. Considered among his most rhythmically irresistible works are "Rudepoema," "Parole do Bebe," "Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5" and "Magdalena." Villa-Lobos' inventive guitar prelude

**On Stage**  
■ "Magdalena" — a light romantic opera by Heitor Villa-Lobos. Where: Oakland Community College, Smith Theatre, Orchard Ridge Campus, 27055 Orchard Lake Road, just south of I-696 in Farmington Hills, 8 p.m., Friday, March 14. Tickets: \$15 general admission; \$5 for students. Ticket information, call (810) 645-6666, or (810) 471-7667.  
■ "King David" — a dramatic oratio by Arthur Honegger. Where: Congregation Shaarey Zedek, 27375 Bell Road, Southfield, 3 p.m., Sunday, March 16. Tickets: \$15 at the door; \$12 for senior citizens, students and advance. For tickets and information, call (313) 341-3466.

in "Magdalena" sets the erotic tone for a story of passionate lovers, and reluctant enemies caught up in a struggle of despair and redemption. The plot of "Magdalena" plot revolves around the mysterious disappearance of the Madonna's statue from the town square of a South American village.

Wayne State's Opera Workshop brings the Brazilian composer's work to the area. Frances Brockington, head of WSU's vocal division, directs the production. Padre Jose, the bass

role, will be sung by Perry Brown, just back in Detroit from his starring role in "Paul Robeson" at the Bristol Riverside Theatre in Pennsylvania.

Soprano Kelli Basher of Livonia appears as Maria, and tenor Eric Gardner is Petro, the romantic leads. Both WSU voice students, they were previously featured in Opera Workshop productions including "The Marriage of Figaro" and "Hansel and Gretel."

Teresa, the general's mistress, will be played by mezzo-soprano

Dorothy Duensing Cormi. "Magdalena" plays again at Wayne State University's Community Arts Auditorium 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, April 11-12, accompanied by the WSU Orchestra. For information, call (313) 577-1795.

**"King David"**

The Shaarey Zedek performance of "King David" features a range of local talent, including acting legend Arthur Boer as the narrator. Unmistakably influenced by Bach, "King David" is best remembered for its compelling choral ending. The symphonic psalm is one of Honegger's many eclectic works. Besides oratorios, Honegger composed jazz and film scores.

The cast includes narrator: Rosalind Gonsella and Rochelle Rosenthal, mezzo-sopranos; Melody Racine, soprano; and Cantor Chaim Najman, tenor. Chorus and orchestra conducted by Suzanne Acton.

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