

Entertainment

Kathy, Wyoming, Editor 313 963-2105 on the web: http://observer.econline.com

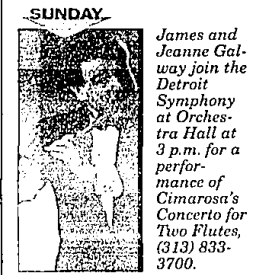
THE WEEKEND



FRIDAY
Christine Chemello stars as Luisa and Steve Jones as Belomy in "The Fantasticks" opening 8 p.m. at the Millennium Centre in Southfield, (248) 552-1225 or (248) 645-6666.



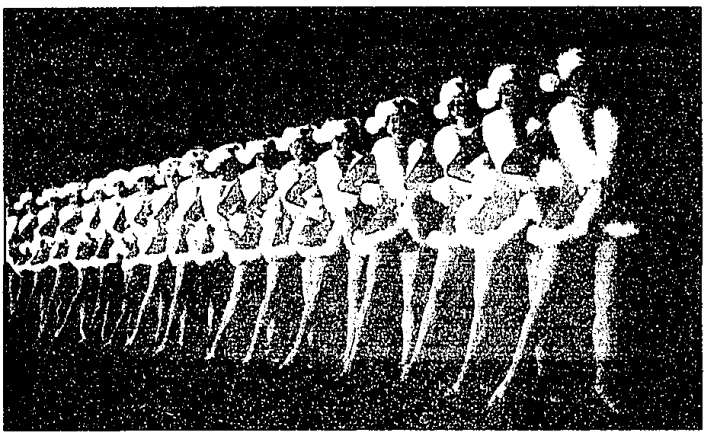
SATURDAY
Catch the holiday spirit at Greenberg's Great Train, Dollhouse & Toy Show, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Novi Expo Center.



SUNDAY
James and Jeanne Galway join the Detroit Symphony at Orchestra Hall at 3 p.m. for a performance of Cimarosa's Concerto for Two Flutes, (313) 833-3700.



Hot fix: The Detroit Zoo shines bright during the fourth annual Wild Lights exhibit Nov. 21 through Jan. 4. Admission \$3 adults, \$2 children ages 2-12; children under 2, free, (248) 541-5835.



Spectacular: The Radio City Rockettes in "Christmas in New York," a featured number in "The Radio City Christmas Spectacular."

IT'S A KICK

FOR LOCAL DANCERS TO BE R.O.C.K.E.T.T.E.S

BY JULIE VOLLES
SPECIAL WRITER

"Step, kick, kick, knee, kick touch. Again. Turn, turn, out, in, touch, step, step, down, back, step, pivot, step, step, walk, walk. And 5, 6, 7, 8," shouts the choreographer.

"God, I hope I got it," thinks every expectant dancer at the grueling audition in "A Chorus Line" back in 1976 when it first opened on Broadway.

Today, the routines are more advanced, the requirements more stringent, the competition fierce. But the desire is just as intense. That was the scene last April at Wayne State University's Old Main Building when 65 lithe dancers showed up at an open casting call. Their dream? To be selected for one of 18 coveted spots in the ultimate chorus line and become a Radio City Rockette.

More than 600 would-be Rockettes and six months later, four chorus lines of 18 each have embarked on marathon rehearsals for "The Radio City Christmas Spectacular."

The Radio City Rockettes will be performing their world-famous Eye-High Kicks in shows opening in New York City, Branson, Mo., Myrtle Beach, S.C., Chicago and, for the first time, here in Detroit at the Fox Theatre, Nov. 28 through Dec. 27.

Six Detroit-area dancers survived two strenuous cuts and a callback, which entailed learning a ballet

"The Radio City Christmas Spectacular"

When:
Friday, Nov. 28 - Saturday, Dec. 27.

8 p.m. performances:

- Nov. 28-29
- Dec. 2-9
- Dec. 9-13
- Dec. 16-20
- Dec. 22-23
- Dec. 26-27

3 p.m. & 7 p.m. performances:

- Nov. 30

1 p.m., 4 p.m. & 7 p.m. performances:

- Dec. 7
- Dec. 14
- Dec. 21

2 p.m. performances:

- Dec. 24
- No show Christmas Day

Where: The Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit

Tickets are \$10-\$50 and can be purchased at the Fox Theatre Box Office and all Ticketmaster locations. To charge tickets by phone, call (248) 433-5145. For more information, call (313) 983-6611.

combination, jazz combination and tap number, plus smiling - at the same time.

Of course, the initial cut was easy for Linda Haberman, choreographer and director of "The Radio City Christmas Spectacular," who auditioned all 500 dancers in 10 cities across the country.

"You have to be between 5 feet 5-1/2-inches and 5 feet 9-inches tall to be considered," said Haberman on a 10-minute break at the Masonic Temple, where the Rockettes were rehearsing before moving into the Fox Theatre last week. "There's no weight requirement, it's just a matter of them being fit and looking good. And there's a certain amount of stamina required."

To prove her theory, Haberman had her auditees stand in place with their arms out to their sides and do the Rockettes Eye-High Kick 25 times in a row.

"Once I see that they're adept at the technical aspects, then there's their presence to look at," said Haberman, who was a dancer on Broadway before becoming the Rockettes choreographer five years ago. "Can they hold themselves and carry themselves and present an optimistic outlook and feel that they really want to do it? It's that desire. Certain people don't want to blend in with 17 other girls, to fill in and be a part of the ensemble."

Not so for 5-foot, 8-inch Denise Caston of Clarkston. When she got the call, she took the semester off from Oakland University where she's dual majoring in computer engineering and dance, to focus all her efforts on being a Radio City Rockette.

"I started thinking about and aspiring to be a Rockette a few years ago," said Caston, after she took a

Please see KICK, E2

Changes make great show better

BY HUGH GALLAGHER
STAFF WRITER

The students will be at the barricades again, though, ironically in the plush surroundings of the Fisher Theatre.

"Les Miserables" is returning for its sixth Detroit engagement. But this will be a slightly different "Les Miserables," incorporating changes made to the Broadway production this past spring.

Why tamper with success, a musical seen by more than 40 million people, 830,000 in Detroit alone, a musical that has been on tour since 1988 and taken in a worldwide gross in excess of \$1.6 billion?

Touring producer Peter Lawrence said when the show's 10th anniversary came, the creators Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schonberg, directors Trevor Nunn and John Caird and producer Cameron Mackintosh decided to take another look at what they were presenting on Broadway.

They replaced cast members who had become tired of their roles, did a complete relighting to give a more dramatic backlit effect, refurbished costumes

Please see SHOW, E2

Les Miserables

What: Musical based on Victor Hugo's novel.

Where: Fisher Theatre, Grand Boulevard, Detroit

When: Nov. 26 through Jan. 4, 8 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays, 7:30 p.m. Sundays, 2 p.m. matinees Saturdays and Sundays. Special holiday performances 1 and 7 p.m. Nov. 26 and 7:30 p.m. Dec. 31. No performances Dec. 24 or Jan. 1.

Tickets: \$15 to \$58 available at the Fisher Theatre Box Office and all Ticketmaster outlets. To charge tickets by phone, call (248) 645-6666.



Arise: Students and workers throw up the barricades in Paris during the climactic second act of "Les Miserables."

STREET SCENE



Fervent following: The Howling Diablos, featuring singer Tino Gross, created a frenzied fanbase by playing the Bear's Den in Berkley every Sunday.

And it goes like this: Detroit funksters Howling Diablos give fans the 'Green Bottle'

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

The Bear's Den is a tiny liquor stand nestled perpendicular to Coolidge Highway in downtown Berkley. On most days, a few cars trickle into the parking lot.

On Sundays, however, the unassuming bar hosts one of the hippest, sweetest nights in the Detroit area when the Howling Diablos bring in their blues/rock/funk sound.

"It's like a Fellini film in there," said band leader/singer Tino Gross of Royal Oak. "It's a complete freak show."

Blue-collar workers, frat boys and sorority girls, Deadheads, drunks, swingers, and regulars hang off the rafters and each other, dance in the aisles and on tables at the Bear's Den to get a glimpse of the jam session.

Besides its fervent following, the Howling Diablos have attracted the likes of rappers Insano Clown Posse and Kid Rock, and Black Crowes keyboardist Eddie Harsch.

"We have a mutual admiration society going on, no doubt. We're a live band and the downs (CD) have a lot of respect for musicians and we have a respect for what they do," Gross said. "It's great to see bands in this town getting together and supporting each other."

The only problem with the Sunday night music marathon and the Howling Diablos' other shows was that the music stopped there. Fans didn't have anything to take home with them. To tide fans over the Howling Diablos released a live album on

Top Dog records, Kid Rock's label. It was taken from a session at the White Room Studios in Detroit.

"It was an exact representation of that day. The live album did phenomenal. It did way beyond my expectations. (Then-rock station) 102.7 was playing it. It was amazing that it got added. A live album doesn't usually do that," Gross explained.

"We wanted to take the time to do this one right." After two years of work, the Howling Diablos - percussionist Ajeed Abdullah "AJ" of Oak Park, guitarist Jeff Grand of Ferndale, Gross, saxophonist Johnny Evans of Berkley, drummer Jerome Day of Dearborn, and bassist Mike Hollis of Detroit - released its first studio CD, "Green Bottle," on Novi's Overture Records.

The Howling Diablos will celebrate the release of "Green Bottle" with a party and performance, with special guests The Holy Cows, Broken Toys, Merge, and The Almighty Lumberjacks of Dear, 7 p.m.-2 a.m. Wednesday, Nov. 26, at the State Theater in Detroit. DJ Bad Rockin' Brand will spin tunes between the acts. The show-closing song "Go Gene Go" will feature a jam session with Kid Rock and surprise celebrity guests.

"Green Bottle" reflects a melting pot of influences culled from blues, rock, and hip-hop artists.

"I think one of my favorite bands is the Rolling Stones. They were a white band in the '60s that wasn't afraid to explore black

Please see HOWLING, E2