THATER

St. Dunstan's goes to the dogs – and the result is hilarious

St. Dunstan's Theatre Guild of Crânbroek presents "Sylvia, a romantic comedy by A. R. Gur-ney, 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, Jan. 30-31 at the theater, 400 Lone Pine Road, (between Woodward and Lahser) Bloomfield Hills. Tickets are \$12, seniors and stu-

dents, \$10, and available by call-ing (248) 644-0527.

Please note that the play does contain some explicit language.

BY SUR SUCHYTA SPECIAL WRITER

St. Dunstan's goes to the dogs in the comedic romp "Sylvia," a romantic love triangle about a wife, a husband, and his exuber-ant and affectionate must Sylvia. The interesting twist is that Sylvia the dog can talk – and the humans seem to understand her

as readily as we do. She may jump, drool, and wag an invisible tail, but the audience is privy to every amusing and deglike thought that crosses her canine mind (you can just imagine what she says to a disrespectful cat). Kate and Greg are empty nesters who have traded the suburbs for a city apartment. Kate, played by Nancy Brassert, is linally free from the ties of motherhood. With a hard wom masters degree in hand, she's ready teenjoy a career as well as travel and entertaining.

Greg, however, played by Keith Lepard, has become increasingly dissatisfied with his job, and discovers Sylvia, played by Janie Castagna, in the park non afternoon when retreating after a fight with his boss.

Greg and Sylvia fall instantly in love – she jumps all over him

and readily admits he's "God"—while Greg acts like a middle aged man having an affair with a nymphet. Not only doesn't Kate want the responsibility of a dog, she quickly comes to realize that Greg pays more attention to Sylvia than her.

As the play progresses, Sylvia becomes a four-legged mistress as Greg fawns on her, and Kate plots to regain her status with her husband. Encounters with a follow dog owner, a family friend, and a counselor further underscore the humor as we winness Greg's and Sylvia's bond grow as Kate's patience wears thin.

Janic Castagna brings unflapping energy and enthusiasm to the demanding canine role of Sylvia. She literally becomes a dog— albeit a wisseracking teenager of a dog. She pants, leaps, jumps on the furniture,

and strains on the leash. She even pulls the old 'dog on the leg of the seated guest' stunt, much to the amusement of the audi-ence. We love the dog and at the same time sympathize with Kate's growing frustration and jealousy.

Greg's behavior is partly explained by his wife's new found independence and the departure of his children. Sylvia becomes his adoring dependent she makes him feel important, Kate's opposition to the relationship seems to drive them closer together. Brassert and Lepard make a likable, realistic couple, and bring the comedy realistically to life. Tom Peterson is delightfully versatile in the triple role of Tom, Phyllis and Leslie.

Band from page E1

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band is open to all adults, just show up for rehearsal. High school students must audition. South Oakland Band rehearses 7:30-9:30 p.m. Mondays at Adams Junior High in Royal Oak, call (248) 548-5838. Like the Farmington Band, this band is also open to all adults. High school students can audition. Birmingham Concert Band, leb y Grant Hoomke, rehearses 7:30-9:45 p.m. Wednesdays at Groves High School. Membership is open to all adults, high school students may audition. For information, call (248) 474-4997.

students may audition. For mation, call (248) 474-4997.

Novi Concert Band, directed by Jack Kopnick of West Bloom-

on Great £2

obsessed with the Cha Cha.

The orphaned Pip is now Finn, raised in the Florida Keys by his sister and her beyfriend Joe. It's here that he meets and is almost killed by a shackled convict (Robert DeNiro) who promises to gut the boy in his sleep if he doesn't procure food, drink, and some heavy duty steel cutters.

Soon after, Miss Havishom hires Finn to 'play' with her nicee Estella, making it no secret that she hopes to use the girl to break men's hearts. Finn's visits are just the warm-up act.

In the book, Pip's great expectutions took him to 19th century London where he was prepped as a gentleman. Here Finn is thrust into the New York art scene, where he's given painting supplies, a to-die-for loft space, and a one-man show, all compliments of a mysterious sponsor.

The identity of Finn's fairy godmother (hint: it's not Miss Havisham) should come as no surprise, because the movie streamlines Dickens' characters down to only a handful. The movie is so insulated that even the busy New York streets are only sparsely populated by routine screamers and dog walker.

One of the most poignant scenes in the novel was Pip's anub of Joe, his one true friend, whose impromptu visit threatens the boy's position as a gontleman. And with what he's get to

field draws its 45 members from throughout the metro Detroit area. They rehearse 7:30-9:30 p.m. Tuesdays at Novi High School, call (248) 932-9244 for

of life in the band," said Hoemke.
"We have a few who took lessons, and then decided to play in the band. It's an opportunity to immerse yourself in the music and forget about everything else. It's an escape, and then there the camaraderie, and friendships that decelop in the group."
Like the other bands, Birming-like the other bands, more information.

"We don't hold auditions," said
Kopnick. "All that's required is

The festival is just one of the many events these bands participate in throughout the year.

"We like to have a good time with music," said Gillepie. "The ham plays a wide variety of music. "We enjoy the festival because it's a chance to hear what the other groups are doing,

concerts are secondary."

Plan to attend the festival to learn more about the community bands in your hometown.

Don't count on 'Great Expectations'

and our members enjoy playing in the combined band."



that afready ranks as one of the most miserable misfires this year.

Though my day job as a high school English teacher makes me something of a literature snob, I'm not adverse to updating the classics. Last year's MTV approach to 'Romeo and Julier was precisely what the Bard needed, with plenty of clever updates and sincere, likable performers to keep the lines fresh. The new Great Expectations, starring Ethan Hawke and Gwyneth Paltrow, stays relatively close to its source. Dotty old Miss Havisham still rooms the overgrown family estate, where she was stood up at the altar three decades ago.

Instead of wearing her tattered wedding dress, Anne Bancroft's incarmation sports a new wig with each scene and is

work with, Joe is one of the few things that comes through the movie more or less intact.

The other performers take turns embarrassing themselves for the camera. For Ethan Hawks, most of these moments come when he's supposed to be in his lete teens, sporting a fright wig and makeup only slightly less phasity than Bancroft's.

Gwyneth Paltrow, who proved so charming in "Emma," is a statue in midrift-baring designer clothes. The crotic scene where she strips for Finn while be makes passionate sketches of her would have been tedious even if we hadn't just seen it in Titanic."

As for Bancroft, the veteran actress tries to have fun with her Norma Desmond take on Miss Havisham. So why couldn't the filmmakers give her and the oth-ers a more interesting update of

rers a more interesting update of the story?

The answer: Because director Alfonso Cuaron has absolutely no idea how to make "Great Expectations" fly in the '90s. It's still a compelling tale, but in its present form one that will likely confuse Dickens novices as much as it trritates his scholars.

John Monaghan welcomes your calls and comments. To leave John a voice mail message, 'dail (734) 953-2047 on a touchtone phone, mailbox 1886.

SCREEN SCENE

A sampling of what's playing

A sampling of what's playing at alternative moie theaters as reviewed by John Monaghan.

Detroit Film Theatre Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit, (313) 933-2323

"The Tango Lesson" (England-1937). Friday-Sunday, Jan. 30 to Feb. 1 (call for showtimes). Sally Potter stars as essentially herself, a talented and impatient filmmaker who becomes entranced by the art of tango. Soon she's taking lessons from a handsome and legendary Argen-

tinian dancer living in Paris.

Magic Bag 22918 Woodward,
Ferndale, (248) 644-3030, (\$2)
"Full Motal Jacket" (USA1987). 9:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan.
29. This 10-year-old film is still
the most recent film from director Stanley Kubrick. His Victnam saga has two parts, both in
training and in battle, but Lee
Ermoy's performance as a drill
instructor in the early scene
ranks as one of the screen's most
vivid and frightening creations.
"Boogie Nights" (USA-1997).
9:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan.

31. Nearly three-hour odyssey about the porn film industry in the 1970s.

Main Art Theatre 118 N. Main Street at 11 Mile, Royal Oak, (248) 542-0180 (\$6.50; \$4 students, seniors & matince; \$3)

"The Sweet Hereafter" (Canada-1997). A study in collective mourning from Canadian director Atom Egoyan in which a town feels the pain when most of its children are killed in a school bus accident.

NP KUNDUH (PG13) WAG THE DOG (B) THE BOXER (B) GOODWELL HENTING (B) CALLACE COMPLETE LISTINGS AND TIMES

NOVI EXPO CENTER

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