

THE WEEKEND

FRIDAY



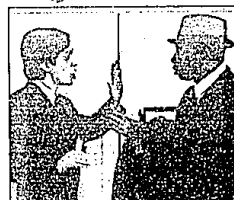
The Farmington Players present "The Fantasticks" 8 p.m. tonight at the Players Barn, 32332 W. 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills. Tickets \$14, call (248) 563-2955.

SATURDAY



Evelyn Glennie, the "First Lady" of solo percussion, appears with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and conductor Dennis Russell Davies, 8:30 p.m. at Orchestra Hall in Detroit. Tickets \$18 to \$48, call (313) 576-6111.

SUNDAY



Youtheatre at Music Hall in Detroit honors Black History Month with a new biography "Paul Robeson, All American," written by Ossie Davis and presented by New York's Theatreworks/USA. Tickets for the 2 p.m. performance, recommended for families with children ages 7 and above, are \$7 in advance, \$8 at the door. Call (313) 963-2366.



Discover Stars on Ice features five Olympic Champions including Kristi Yamaguchi, Tara Lipinski and Ekatarina Gordeeva 8 p.m. Saturday at The Palace of Auburn Hills. Tickets \$58, \$45 and \$32, call (248) 645-6666 or (248) 377-0100 for information.



STAFF PHOTO BY GUY WARRICK

Today's stars: Mark Ridley stands in front of a wall of autographed photographs of well-known comedians who have appeared at his club.

THE KING OF THE Castle

CELEBRATES 20TH YEAR

BY KEELY WYCONK
STAFF WRITER
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Class clown of his Walled Lake Central High School class, Mark Ridley has been making people laugh for a long time.

On Jan. 4 he celebrated the 20th anniversary of the comedy club he started in the basement of The Meeting Place, a restaurant in West Bloomfield.

Now one of the top comedy clubs in the country, Mark Ridley's Comedy Castle has called Royal Oak home since 1989.

Framed autographed pictures of today's comedy stars decorate the walls including Tim Allen, Jerry Seinfeld, Dave Coulier, David Letterman, Ellen DeGeneres and Richard Belzer.

Ridley chuckles as he remembers when he had to give people their money back after Paul Reiser performed. It was before those "Mad About You" days with Helen Hunt.

"People walked out, they didn't like his show," said Ridley.

Reiser's autographed picture is revealing — "To Mark & the Comedy Castle, certain parts were fun."

New direction

Always a lover of comedy, Ridley really wanted to make films. After graduating from Wayne State University with a bachelor's degree in TV, radio and film, Ridley applied to the University of Southern California film program.

While hanging out at the Comedy Store in 1978 California, waiting to hear if he made the cut for the program, he watched Richard Pryor, David Letterman and Steve Martin perform.

Ridley wasn't chosen for the program but came home with an idea — to open a comedy club like the Comedy Store.

While working as a waiter, he began

Please see CASTLE, E2

MARK RIDLEY'S COMEDY CASTLE

WHERE: 269 E. Fourth St., Royal Oak
SHOW TIMES: 8:30 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday; 8:15 and 10:45 p.m. Friday-Saturday; 7:30 p.m. Sunday.

OPEN MIKE/IMPROV NIGHT: Tuesday, Totally Unheard Theater performs 8:30 p.m.

TICKETS: 8:30 p.m. Tuesday, \$5; 8:30 p.m. Wednesday-Thursday, \$6; 8:15 p.m. and 10:45 p.m. Friday-Saturday, \$12; 8:30 p.m. Sunday, \$9 — (Special engagements excluded).

RESERVATIONS/INFORMATION: (248) 542-9900 or www.comedycastle.com on the Web.

SEATS: 400 people.

VALET PARKING: \$4

FOR RENT: Club will host office luncheons, seminars and other daytime events. Excellent sound and lighting, waitstaff and catering available.

For information about Evershed Productions, call (248) 646-3460.

February Highlights

■ Jack Simmons — through Feb. 7. Simmons has been featured on "Comic Strip Live" and "Showtime."

■ O'Brien & Valdez — Feb. 10-14. This comedy team has appeared on A&E's "Comedy on the Road," and "An Evening at the Improv."

Also appearing, Frank B.

■ Lewis Black — Feb. 17-21, a regular on the "Conan O'Brien Show," and commentator on Comedy Central's "The Daily Show." Also appearing, Steve Bills.

■ Blair Shannon — Feb. 24-28, a regular on the stages of Las Vegas and Atlantic City. Also appearing Gary George.

Special Engagements

■ Carol Leifer — March 19-21, seen on the her on TV show "All Right Already," and a writer and performer on the "Seinfeld Show." Tickets \$17.50 Friday-Saturday; \$15 Sunday.

■ Richard Jewl — March 25-27, star of TV's "Platypus Man," and numerous cable specials. Also appearing Hal Spear. Tickets \$20 Thursday; \$22.50 Friday, \$25 Saturday.



Featured comedian: Jack Simmons is performing at Mark Ridley's Comedy Castle through Feb. 7.

MUSIC

Maynard Ferguson has a 'Brass Attitude'

BY HUGH GALLAGHER
STAFF WRITER
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When Maynard Ferguson was cutting the mustard at 18, he was jitterbugging.

Today when college students spontaneously start moving to the music of Ferguson's Big Bop Nouveau Band, they're "swing dancing." Whatever it's called, the 71-year-old jazz master is delighted.

"We often do halftimes at major football games. When we did a recent Washington-Arizona game, a pep rally and half time. At the pep rally for about 4,000 people, you could see the people swing dancing," he said. "Half-time the cheerleaders, men and women, when we played 'Just Friends,' they all started dancing. I was amazed they could swing dance. It's great for jazz music."

Ferguson has been involved with jazz music since he was a teenager in Montreal. He began playing at the end

WHO: Jazz trumpeter Maynard Ferguson and his Big Bop Nouveau Band

WHERE: 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 6. WHEN: Adray Auditorium of the MacKenzie Fine Arts Center, Henry Ford Community College, 5101 Evergreen Road, Dearborn.

TICKETS: \$25 for twilight and evening concerts. Call (313) 845-6470.

the swing era, played with the great bop players and made his reputation as an aggressive, hard blowing trumpet player with Stan Kenton's progressive jazz band.

Saturday, he brings that bright, high register, aggressive sound to Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn.

"The current band is really great personnel," he said in a telephone interview from Las Vegas. "They're great players, many of them out of the University of Miami. The band is three trumpets plus myself, one trombone, piano, bass and drums and two saxophones, which is the lineup I've had for

the last three years."

Ferguson enjoys playing with young musicians and often does clinics as he take his band around the world. He got his start in music at an early age, originally as a classical violinist who soloed with the Canadian Broadcasting Company Orchestra when he was 11.

He was encouraged by his violinist mother to pursue music. Even if it wasn't the classical music she preferred, she wanted him to be exposed to the best.

"When I was in Montreal, my mother was just slightly disappointed that I wasn't going to be a classical violinist."



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Maynard Ferguson