

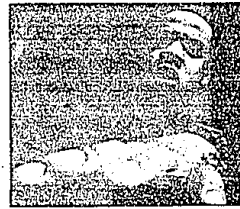
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The web: <http://observer.eccentric.com>

Thursday, March 11, 1999

THE WEEKEND

FRIDAY



Jay-Z (above), DMX, Method Man and Redman perform 9 p.m. at Cobo Arena in Detroit. Tickets are \$25 and \$37.50 for the all-ages show. For more information, call (313) 983-6616 or (248) 645-6666.

SATURDAY



"1964... The Tribute," a Beatles tribute band, returns to the Magic Bag, 22920 Woodward Ave., Ferndale at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$15 in advance. For more information, call (248) 544-3030 or visit <http://www.themagicbag.com>

SUNDAY



Guest conductor, Hans Vonk (pictured) leads the Detroit Symphony Orchestra with guest Jean-Pierre Rampal 3 p.m. at Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Tickets \$13-\$48, call (313) 576-5111.



Kids can roll up their sleeves, create a hand puppet, and enjoy a variety of family-oriented activities at Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn during Family Fun Month, weekends through Sunday, March 28. The museum is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., call (313) 271-1620 for more information.

Love affair: Playwright Karim Alrawi's story examines the relationship between Edsel and Eleanor Ford.



Tribute to industry: Diego Rivera in early 1932 as he worked on the "Detroit Industry" frescoes at the Detroit Institute of Arts. The mural is considered the finest example of the Rivera's work.

A mural transcends walls

Meadow Brook's 'Gift of Glory' raises expectation for regional-specific theater

By FRANK PROVENZANO
STAFF WRITER
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When he arrived at Meadow Brook Theatre two years ago, Karim Alrawi never suspected that the educational outreach program placed in his charge would extend so broadly.

Apparently, as the theater's playwright-in-residence, he has lectured about drama at local schools, and encouraged area writers in their literary pursuits.

But Alrawi's most lasting impression might be the parable for the stage he's created about one of the most recognizable symbols of labor, technology and gritty Motown — Diego Rivera's "Detroit Industry Frescoes" at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Because of the widespread anticipation for his new play, "Gift of Glory," based on the relationship between muralist Rivera and Edsel Ford — who funded the wall painting — Alrawi is proving that indigenous stories have a place on center stage. Especially if that stage is at Meadow Brook Theatre, with its slipping subscriber-base, sluggish ticket sales, and reputation for predictably safe, albeit high-quality productions.

The subtext of "Gift of Glory," which opens this week for a three-week run, may be the play's foreboding sense of how art transcends ruthless aggrandizers and short-sighted politics.

Throw in a couple subplots about the love story between Edsel and Eleanor Ford, the "common man" in search of a rallying cause, and the layers of Alrawi's drama come to life.

On a more practical level, however, "Gift of Glory" may also hold a clue to Meadow Brook's future.

History revisited
"This play demonstrates one of the most important reasons for a regional theater — doing 'geographically specific theater,'" said Geoffrey Sherman, artistic director at Meadow Brook.

"Not only will 'Gift of Glory' get an audience, but many people will



Inspired: Playwright Karim Alrawi, left, discusses Rivera's mural with actor Geoffrey Beauchamp. The cast spent a day at the Detroit Institute of Arts to study the mural.

realize that they can't get this kind of intimate, communal experience anywhere else."

Ironically, those central to the play's development aren't even from the area. Alrawi, Sherman, director Deborah Wicks and five of the seven-member cast are transplants to the region.

The Egyptian-born Alrawi, who

speaks with impeccable diction and an accent inherited from his British mother, recognized that sometimes you just don't see what's right in front of you.

"Growing up in Alexandria, I thought the pyramids were a pile of rocks," he said.

That, of course, understates the type of biographical mining Alrawi has done to recreate the milieu of Detroit in the early 1930s; a time of economic depression, class warfare and ideological

Please see MURAL, E2



Surrounded by history: Chris de Oni, left, portrays artist Diego Rivera in "Gift of Glory," directed by Debra Wicks. (right).

HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

St. Patrick's Day events showcase local talent

By KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER

Denise Marie Costello of West Bloomfield, recently crowned the Maid of Erin, is looking forward to celebrating St. Patrick's Day.

"It's an honor," said Costello, 22, about being crowned Maid of Erin, and the responsibility that goes along with it. "My father grew up in Ireland. I've always been interested in my family's history."

She and her court — Maureen Lewis of Livonia and Bridget Mulcahy of Canton, will be participating in the St. Patrick's Day Parade Sunday, March 14. The parade begins at 2 p.m. on the corner of Michigan Ave. and Third St. in Detroit and ends near Tiger Stadium at the Gaelic League.



Michael Bolvitch

Costello was judged on poise, personality and Irish history. For the talent part, she sang an Irish song. "I was actually less nervous this year than last year," she said about the competition. Last year she was first runner-up.

Costello earned a bachelor of fine arts degree in musical theater performance from Western Michigan University. She recently finished "A Wonderful Life," the musical, in Warsaw Indiana's Wagon Wheel Theatre, and is currently involved in an on-camera class taught by Janne Brody one of Chicago's top casting directors.

"I want to be able to perform in musicals or live theater," she said. As Maid of Erin, Costello will be a role model for young Irish girls, and participate in various Irish activities throughout the year.

She's also planning a trip to Ireland. Her Maid of Erin prize package includ-

Please see EVENTS, E2

ST. PATRICK'S DAY CELEBRATIONS

■ **Sunday, March 14** — Liz Carroll, Larry Nugent and Jim Dewan in concert with three champion step-dancers at the Hellenic Cultural Center, 36375 Joy Road (east of Newburgh), Westland. Doors open 6 p.m., concert begins 7 p.m. Dinners and cash bar will be available 6-7 p.m. A warm-up group will entertain during the dinner hour. Tickets \$12 at the door. Call Mick Gavin, (313) 637-3489, for more information.

■ **Sunday, March 14** — St. Patrick's Day Parade, 2 p.m. on Michigan Ave., followed by entertainment at the Irish American Club, Gaelic League, 2029 Michigan Ave., Detroit, call (313) 963-8895 for information. Entertainment will also be offered at the Gaelic League throughout the day on Wednesday, March 17.

■ **Wednesday, March 17** — 14th Annual St. Patrick's Day Irish Fest featuring over 60 local Irish entertainers at the Hellenic Cultural Center in Westland. Doors open 4 p.m. Corred beef and cabbage dinners, snacks and cash bar will be available all evening beginning at 5 p.m. Tickets \$8 at the door. No charge for children accompanied by an adult. Continuous entertainment all evening until approximately 11 p.m. Call Mick Gavin, (313) 637-3489, for information.

■ **Wednesday, March 17** — Blackthorn performs 7-10 p.m. in the School of Management lecture theater on the University of Michigan-Dearborn campus, 4001 Evergreen Road between Ford Road and Michigan Ave.) in Dearborn. Also performing will be the Celtic duo of Mike Mullen and Andy Kilburn and dancers from the Kitty Hezeman Celtic Dance Troupe. A sampler of Irish treats will be served during intermission. Tickets \$35 per person, call (313) 843-3098. Proceeds benefit the Fair Lane Music Guild and Dearborn Community Arts Council.

■ **Friday-Saturday, March 19-20** — "Irish Eyes are Smiling," starring June Haver, Dick Haymes and Monty Woolley, guest organist Dave Calandine at the Historic Redford Theatre, 17560 Lahar Road (at Grand River) Detroit. 7:30 p.m. (organ overture), 8 p.m. film Friday and Saturday, and 1:30 p.m. (organ overture), 2 p.m. film Saturday. Tickets \$2.50, available at the door.

■ **Sunday, March 28** — Concert by Ireland's Golden Tenor, Frank Patterson, accompanied by Eily O'Grady & the Birmingham Celtic Pipe and Drum Band, 3 p.m. at Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Ave (at Parsons) Detroit. Advance tickets \$25 balcony, \$30 main floor, \$50 dress circle. Call (313) 676-6111. Event benefits St. Patrick's Senior Center in Detroit.

WHAT: "Gift of Glory: Edsel Ford and the Diego Rivera Murals at the Detroit Institute of Arts," written by Karim Alrawi and directed by Debra L. Wicks.

WHEN: Through Sunday, April 4. Performances 8 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, except 6 p.m. Saturday, March 13 and March 27; 2 p.m. Wednesday, Saturday & Sunday; and 6:30 p.m. Sunday.

WHERE: Meadow Brook Theatre, Wilson Hall, on the campus of Oakland University, Rochester Hills

TICKETS: \$19.50-\$35. (248) 377-3300.