

## THE WEEKEND

### FRIDAY



**Doc Severinsen and His All-Star Big Band perform as part of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra Ameritech Jazz Series 8 p.m. at Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Tickets \$15-\$46, call (313) 576-5111.**

### SATURDAY



**Kathleen Madigan brings laughter to Mark Ridley's Comedy Castle, 269 E. Fourth St., Royal Oak. Performances 8:15 p.m. and 10:45 p.m. Tickets \$15, call (248) 542-9900.**

### SUNDAY



**Marquis Theatre, 135 E. Main St., Northville, presents the musical version of "Velveteen Rabbit" at 2:30 p.m. Tickets \$7, call (248) 349-8110.**



Turn-of-the-century tragedy: *Madame Butterfly* commits suicide after being deceived by an American Navy lieutenant.

## Michigan Opera Theatre honors tradition in tragic love story

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN  
STAFF WRITER  
lchomin@oe.homecomm.net

When Giacomo Puccini wrote "Madame Butterfly" he could not have foreseen the anxiety he would cause for Teri Hoffman and her daughter Jillian some 95 years later. The 5-1/2-year-old Rochester girl plays the daughter of Butterfly and U.S. Navy lieutenant B.F. Pinkerton in the Michigan Opera Theatre production opening April 17 at the Detroit Opera House.

Of course, Puccini had his own set of troubles when "Madame Butterfly" opened at La Scala in 1904. A jeering and hissing crowd forced the Italian composer to cancel the opera and synthesize two lengthy acts into three shorter ones. The show went on with Toscanini conducting the new effort, as he had the first, and it's been a hit with audiences ever since.

Explaining the plot to Jillian, however, has proved a challenge to Teri Hoffman. Language differences also caused difficulties. Madame Butterfly will be sung in Italian with English subtitles.

"It's difficult to explain when she asks why daddy married another woman and then explaining the suicide scene, that it's pretend, and this was long ago and this was how they kept their honor," said Hoffman. "Also, there's a lot of Italian words she has to know to be on cue, so it's educating me first."

True to Puccini's tragic story of unrequited love, Michigan Opera Theatre staging director Mario Corradi cast Madame Butterfly's marriage to the callous American in Nagasaki. This is "Madame Butterfly" although he's been directing operas since 1982. Corradi's displeasure with

a 1983 Charleston production on which he was assistant director, set the tone for Michigan Opera Theatre's traditional rereading of Puccini's work. Corradi wanted to avoid altering the opera by setting it in a Nagasaki brothel on the eve of the World War II bombing of the city as the 1983 production had done.

"A director is not a composer," said Corradi. "With the fad in Europe there's haughtiness on the part of the director who thinks it needs updating."

"A stickler for tradition, Corradi stayed away from "the stereotype of cute Japanese gestures." Instead, he's incorporated several elements of Kabuki theater. Corradi has worked in Japan as an opera director since 1990, so he's well-acquainted with the culture.

"Ten years ago women still walked two steps behind the men," said Corradi. "While that's changed I tried to retain the story. But in a sense this 'Butterfly' could take place in any culture that takes advantage of another culture, where a man thinks he can buy a woman for 100 yen. Thank God for the subtleties that people can see the contempt Pinkerton has for the culture. Pinkerton is the ugly American."

"Madame Butterfly" is not a weak woman according to Corradi. She is simply a woman who loves a man who scorns her. Three years later when Pinkerton returns with an American wife to retrieve the child he had with her, Butterfly, to keep her honor, commits suicide. That's a tragic scenario for any age to handle, but Jillian seems to be taking it all in stride. Hiding her head in Teri's arms helps when the subject arises often.

"I like the Butterfly," said Jillian, a kindergarten student at J.



Trouble: Jillian Hoffman plays *Madame Butterfly*'s young son in the Michigan Opera Theatre's production at the Detroit Opera House.

### "MADAME BUTTERFLY"

**WHAT:** The Michigan Opera Theatre stages Giacomo Puccini's tragic love story with a double cast which includes Chinese and Russian sopranos in the title role.

**WHEN:**  
• 8 p.m. Saturday, April 17, April 24 and May 1  
• 8 p.m. Wednesday, April 21 and Friday, April 23  
• 2 p.m. Sunday, April 18, April 25 and May 2

**WHERE:** Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway.

**TICKETS:** \$18-\$95, call (313) 237-SING or (248) 645-6666.

Baldwin Elementary in Rochester.

It's not surprising that one of Jillian's favorite parts is the bath scene where she gets to blow bubbles. Jillian is a typical little girl who when not on the stage loves to draw, paint and play with her Barbies. When asked if she'll be nervous on opening night, she replies "no, because it will be just like rehearsal."

Please see BUTTERFLY, E2

## Nancy Wilson enjoys telling stories with song

BY HUGH GALLAGHER  
STAFF WRITER  
hgallagher@oe.homecomm.net

Nancy Wilson is proud to call herself a "saloon singer." "There aren't any supper clubs anymore, and I prefer supper clubs," she said. "I'm a saloon singer and I love it, but you do what you do."

On April 24, Wilson will perform with her trio in the comfortable surroundings of the Southfield Centre for the Arts, once a synagogue.

"I feel for the audiences in big auditoriums because they miss the nuances," she said.

And the nuances mean a lot when listening to Nancy Wilson, often regarded as one of the last great female singers from the "golden age of song," a direct link to Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughn and Dinah Washington.

Wilson was born in Chillicothe, Ohio, in 1937 and in her 62 years she's recorded 60 albums. Her first recording for Capitol was "Like in Love" and she had her first hit in 1962 with the great jazz sax player Cannonball Adderly, "Save Your Love For Me." In 1964 she won a Grammy and a large following with "How Glad I Am."



Nancy Wilson

Her albums have explored numerous styles of music that have won her an audience in this country and abroad, especially in Japan where she recorded a series of successful albums in the early '80s.

Her most recent album, "If I Had My Way" (Columbia) moves into more contemporary territory, the world of smooth jazz.

"That one is AC, adult contemporary with electric instruments, a more R&B sound than traditional," Wilson said.

When asked why she would abandon her traditional sound, she responded bluntly.

"I did it because I'm tired of marketing people not knowing where to put me," she said.

The album's best feature is Wilson's expressive, dramatic voice, but it is often buried in overproduced, soggy arrangements, synthetic electric saxes, repetitious hooks and inane backing vocals. It isn't Wilson at her best, but it is what radio stations are playing these days.

Two of the numbers, Bill Withers' "Hello Like Before" and "A Fool in Love" were recorded at a studio in Oak Park with producer Michael Powell.

Wilson is at her best telling a story and that is the kind of material she is most comfortable performing. Except for an annoying electric saxophone intro, that is best exemplified on her new album by the Withers' song.

"I look for a story," she said. "I would rather tell a story than have a hook. I like to have a beginning, a middle and an end and have a bridge."

Please see WILSON, E2

**WHO:** Singer Nancy Wilson  
**WHERE:** Southfield Centre for the Arts, 24350 Southfield Road, Southfield  
**WHEN:** 8 p.m. Saturday, April 24  
**TICKETS:** \$30 and \$35 may be purchased at any Ticketmaster outlet. To charge call (248) 645-6666. Tickets also available at Southfield City Hall, 26000 Evergreen Road.

## DANCE

## An ancient tale with contemporary sensuality

BY FRANK PROVENZANO  
STAFF WRITER  
fprovenzano@oe.homecomm.net

A story about the dominance of a patriarchal culture whereby women submit to the whims and desires of men commits just about every sin against political correctness, not to mention being simply anachronistic.

But "A Tale of One Thousand and One Nights" has survived since the 14th century because of the simple story of love, trust and the pain of betrayal. (The few hundred beheadings are only thrown in to make a point.) Of course, in the age of theatrical spectacle, "A Tale of One Thou-

**WHAT:** "A Thousand and One Nights," performed by the Ballet International.  
**WHEN:** Friday-Sunday, April 16-18. Performances 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday; 3 p.m. Sunday.  
**WHERE:** Music Hall for the Performing Arts, 350 Madison Ave., Detroit.  
**TICKETS:** \$31.50-\$41.50; (313) 963-2398 or (248) 645-6666

sand and One Nights" has transcended the literal to become big-budget fodder for Hollywood, Disney, and Broadway. (Can you say countless productions featuring Aladdin, Sinbad and Ali Baba?) Add ballet to the list of notable

inspirations, thanks to dynamic choreographer Eldar Aliev.

The former star of the world renowned Kirov Ballet, Aliev brings his Indianapolis-based dance company, Ballet International, to the Music Hall for performances of "A Tale of One Thousand and One Nights" this weekend.

The ballet, created by Aliev three years ago, has played to sold-out audiences throughout the United States. In 1997, the ballet was named the major dance of the year by "Arts & Entertainment" magazine.

Please see DANCE, E2

Clay artist Robin Sterling is one of 325 professional artisans displaying and selling their work at the fifth annual Sugarloaf Art Fair, Friday-Sunday, April 16-18 at the Novi Expo Center in Novi. Admission is \$6. For more information, call (300) 210-9900.



Exotic spectacle: Ballet Internationale company members in a scene from "A Thousand and One Nights," an extravaganza of lavish costumes, sets and choreography.