

# Wonderful performances in 'The Merchant of Venice'

Schoolcraft College presents "The Merchant of Venice," 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, Nov. 12-13 in the Liberal Arts Theatre on campus, 18600 Hogerty, between 8th and Seven Mile roads, Livonia. Tickets \$6, call (734) 462-4696.

By BOB WEIBEL

SPECIAL WRITER

principal players turn in wonderful performances. Professor James Hartman has edited the play slightly to update archaic words from Shakespearean times to make it more palatable.

For example, "in sooth" becomes in truth. And "rate of usance" becomes rate of interest.

The central conflict involves a young man borrowing money from a friend to finance a romance with a wealthy young lady. To test the values of her suitors, she promises her dead father to marry the man who makes the correct choice

between gold, silver and lead chests. Lots of comic possibilities there — and no doubt 400 years ago Elizabethan audiences found it very funny. There is a dark side to the play, however.

Much of the world was virtually anti-Semitic in Shakespeare's time. Who better to be a villain than Shylock — the Jew who lends money to Christians.

Today, the divisive language directed at him is a bit disconcerting, similar to the way modern popular culture treated American Indians not so many years ago. Ray Van Hoeck (Shylock) creates a marvelously sympathetic character. His "revenge" speech in which he explains why he insists on his "pound of flesh" in lieu of repayment of his loan is spellbinding. If only the actor entering at the end would delay a beat, however, allowing us to digest the moment.

Despite his wonderful character, Van Hoeck tends to hold one stage position too long. Both he and Joril Doll (Portia) deliver Shakespeare's lines in such a natural manner that one is seldom aware that they are speaking in verse. Not any easy task as many of the less experienced actors can attest.

Doll, as Portia, lights up the stage with energy and style as a young woman hoping the man of her dreams selects the correct chest. It is a stunning performance. Brian Taylor gives his usual solid performance as Bassanio, her love interest. John Rowland (Antonio) looks the part of a successful merchant, but needs to add more spice to the delivery of his lines and variety to his movement. Colleen Greenwell is very good as Portia's friend, Nerissa. Diane Aretz is most effective as Shylock's daughter, Jessica, who runs off with his money and marries a

Christian. Others appearing include Jason Birbky, Benjamin Karl, Nick Ward, David Ormsby, Lisa Brawley, David Jenvey, Ryan-Ver Klann, Jeremy Hargis, Tom Rowland, John Abair, Brendan Smith, Charles LaCroix, Antonio Muse and Tom Noe.

The setting, lights, sound and costuming are well done, though there are an interesting variety of footwear for a period piece.

Bob Weibel is a Westland resident who writes about theater for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

## Avon from page E2

varying movements of a blind character and the thug, who tend to move erratically. It's a thing that.

As you might imagine, a play with a blind lead character puts a premium on lighting to draw the audience to the unfamiliar circumstance of having to rely on its instincts. Cast members were supported throughout this production by lighting techniques that enhanced their scenes. No simple task, given the importance that the many different degrees of light had to the plot.

John Doflein, who also did scenic design for the season opening production of "The Music Man," deserves applause in this area.

"Wait until Dark" is a dialogue-intensive play which taxes its performers and the director to sustain suspense. There were occasional lapses in the exchanges between characters and glitches in sound and special effects that prompted audience members to settle a bit deeper in their seats.

Director Jim Stillman is an unabashed fan of Knott's mysteries, including the classic "Dial M for Murder," which Avon presented two years ago. He has re-presents the story in an easy-to-follow manner, and although the production is not exactly a nail-biter, he does establish a distinct identity for each character. This is most evident with the con-

men, portrayed by Michael Jefries, Mike Fraley and Anthony Sherman.

Musicals and comedies will always have an advantage in being consistent crowd-pleasers.

An audience that believes community theater should also attempt to stretch itself by presenting more challenging productions will appreciate this one.

John O'Donnell is a Troy resident who writes about community theater for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

## STAY TUNED

For three decades, **Bobby Lewis and his Crackerjack Band** have been rocking around Metro Detroit. The classic rock band will grab audiences attention at Livonia's Winter Wonderland Parade Saturday, Nov. 20 while performing at Wonderland Mall.

Sure it isn't the old "Your Mustache" lounge in Dearborn, where Lewis played with his band Sticks and Stones for 13 years, but audiences are sure to love that blend of rock, jazz and bluegrass.

It's a mystery to me. One Livonia reader wrote with a question. What has happened to

**KISS FM?** One night she turned on the radio to find it changed to a rock format? Anyone with information may e-mail scasdon@oe.homecomm.net.

While Delilah may be missing from the airwaves, director Kevin Smith ("Clueless," "Chasing Amy") is in plain sight with his latest film "Dogma."

While the movie may be shrouded in controversy for its take on religion, Alanis Morissette's latest single "Still" should tide eager fans over before she completes another album. Look for Morissette's cameo as God in "Dogma," opening tomorrow.

## Cruise into the Millennium

### AT BOSTON MANOR

#### CARIBBEAN VACATION DOOR PRIZE, SPONSORED BY THE HEARTS OF LIVONIA INCLUDES:

- ROUND TRIP AIRFARE.
- 8 DAYS AND 7 NIGHTS AT BEACHSIDE VILLAS
- CARIBBEAN RESORT ON ST. MAARTEN ISLAND

Featuring

- LUXURY CRUISE SHIP THEME
- STEVE KING AND THE DITTLIES AND KALEIDOSCOPE
- PREMIUM BAR-PKG. 6
- PRIME RIB DINNER 9-11
- 150.00 per person until Nov. 16th
- Limited Seating

(734) 427-9110

Join us for a once in a lifetime Millennium Event

## Millennium & New Years Eve Party

### Roma BANQUETS

32350 Cherry Hill, Garden City

#### LIVE BAND

Featuring

- Channel 6 Band and DJ Entertainment
- Premium Bar-Pkg. 6
- Prime Rib Dinner
- 75.00 per person until Nov. 16th
- Limited Seating

(734) 422-4550

## HOLIDAY FAVORITES

### Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol

adapted and directed by Charles Nolte

November 20—December 26

#### Meadow Brook Theatre

Oakland University's Professional Theatre

For tickets call the Box Office  
(248) 377-3300

Tickets also available at all  
Ticketmaster locations.  
(248) 645-6666

Supported by  
**Observer & Eccentric**

Presented with the generous support of  
**GMAC**

SEATS STILL AVAILABLE FOR THESE DATES!

HALF PRICE  
PREVIEW PERFORMANCES

Saturday, Nov. 20, 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 21, 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, Nov. 22, 2:00 p.m.

Sunday, Nov. 21, 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Dec. 1, 8:00 p.m.

Thursday, Dec. 2, 8:00 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 3, 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, Dec. 4, 2:00 p.m.

Sunday, Dec. 5, 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Dec. 9, 8:00 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 10, 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, Dec. 11, 2:00 p.m.

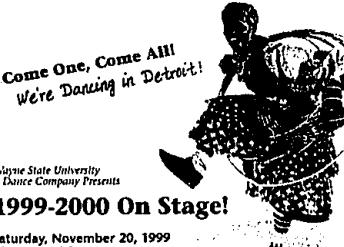
Sunday, Dec. 12, 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, Dec. 12, 6:30 p.m.

and all performances December 16-26

## Calling All Explorers!

... search, discover, create



Wayne State University Dance Company Presents

1999-2000 On Stage!

Saturday, November 20, 1999

11 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Community Arts Auditorium  
Wayne State University, 450 Kirby

School Group Performances  
Tuesday, November 16 — Friday, November 19  
9:45 a.m. and 11 a.m.

For further information call AVAD Dance Department (313) 577-4271

Wayne State University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.

PublicTVauction.com

The Detroit Public TV Auction is now online!

Shop It

PublicTVauction.com

Bid on travel packages, housewares, collectibles, gift certificates, and more

Shop 24 hours, 7 days a week with features like Auto Bid™

To Donate, call

313.876.8350

Support Detroit Public TV

Travel Packages Antiques & Collectors Auctions

Powered by VERI

## MEADOW BROOK THEATRE



CONCEIVED BY MARY KYTE WITH  
MEL MARVIN & GARY PEARLE

instant discount coupon!

SAVE \$1 OFF EVERY TINYPES TICKET

Just use code word "TIN" when you call

MON-SAT 10 AM-5 PM

TICKETS 212

377-3300

MON-SAT 10 AM-5 PM