

'Jake's Women' will make you laugh and cry

The Players Guild of Dearborn presents the Neil Simon comedy, "Jake's Women" 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, Jan. 28-29 at the playhouse on Madison near the southwest corner of Monroe and Grand Drive in Dearborn. Tickets \$11. call (313) 561-TKTS.

BY SUE SUCHYTA

SPATIAL WRITER

The Player's Guild of Dearborn's production of Neil Simon's "Jake's Women" is witty and touching. This mature comedy relies more on the strength of its characters and less on one-liners and physical humor.

Under Nancy Wolter's direction, the cast has taken a well-written script and turned it into

an intriguing, entertaining evening of theater.

Simon's Jake, a playwright, narrates the play. He is at a crisis point in his life — his second marriage is in danger of dissolving, and he can't let go of the memories of his first wife, who died in an auto accident.

Jake has lived his life creating stories through his plays, and he's created his own life, conjuring his wives, sister, therapist and daughter from both the present and the past, to try to figure out his own life.

Though Jake supposedly is creating the scene in his mind, his characters tease him, challenge him and force him to confront his shortcomings.

Lonnie Valentini of Livonia as Jake heads up the cast as a man full of contradictions. He wears his heart on his sleeve yet holds a part of himself back, hiding behind his cleverly crafted words. Jake is both proud and insecure. Valentini was able to capture these contradictions, and weave them into one believable character.

Kim Donovan of Farmington Hills as Julie, the first wife, has the spirit and energy to deliver a remarkable, touching performance.

Emily Tyrybhan as Maggie, Jake's second wife, is an interesting contrast to Donovan's Julie. Though Jake was drawn to women of spirit, Maggie represents a more pragmatic, mature relationship, one more rooted in everyday reality in contrast to the heady dreams of Jake's first love. Maggie is Jake's true foil and equalizer — she is his reality check, and her mature love pulls him out of the past and gives him the courage to face his future, and to surrender some of his self-absorption. She makes him realize he must forgive those he loves before he can ever forgive himself and get on with his life. Tyrybhan kept a good balance between the sad and the humorous aspect of her role, bringing strength and balance to her character's kaleidoscope of emotion.

Caitlin Donovan of Farming-

ton Hills brought energy and enthusiasm to her role as young Molly, Jake's daughter. Meredith Gordon conveyed fitness and a natural stage presence to her role as the older Molly.

Sally Hart Goodman made Karen the ideal big sister, capable of dispensing advice and sympathy without becoming preachy or wearing out her welcome. Patti Jones, as Edith, added a touch of saucy humor to the role of Jake's therapist, without letting him take himself too seriously.

Jones showed more self confidence in this role than she's shown in the past, and is coming into her own as a strong character actress.

Jeanine Matlow is marvelously funny as Sheila, Jake's girlfriend of convenience when Maggie takes a hiatus from him.

Nancy Wolter and John Calder's set design is clean and classy, with two levels, and multiple entrances and exits are integrated well into its layout. Mary Calder and Diana Reynolds' costumes are elegant and flattering to the characters.

You'll laugh and cry, and you'll leave with the hope that Jake really can get his girl and his life back on track. You'll share his frustrations and recognize your common kinship, while enjoying the quick-paced entertainment.

Century Theatre presents musical tribute to Patsy Cline

(UPI Newswire) — Get ready to tap your fingers and stomp your feet when "Always ... Patsy Cline" opens at Detroit's Century Theatre on Feb. 23.

This musical tribute to the country music great features over 20 of Cline's best known hits, including "Walkin' After Midnight," "Your Cheatin' Heart," "Crazy," "I Fall To Pieces" and "Back in Baby's Arms."

Written and directed by Texas playwright Ted Swindley,

"Always ... Patsy Cline" is a retrospective of Patsy Cline's music career, told through the eyes of comedic housewife Louise Seger (actress Diana Rogers), a long-time adoring fan. Seger's brief encounter with Patsy Cline in 1961 and subsequent correspondence with the country music sensation provide the basis for the show's dialogue.

Joined onstage by a six-piece honky-tonk band, actress Jessica Welch gives a concert performance of Patsy Cline's most memorable songs while wearing fashions similar to the unique ensembles adored by Cline, dubbed the "Glamour Girl of Country Music."

"Always ... Patsy Cline" is based on actual events in the singer's life, and includes the text of a letter she wrote in 1961 to Louise Seger. In 1963, Cline died in a plane crash, ending a flourishing career at age 30.

"Always ... Patsy Cline" is a celebration of Patsy Cline's timeless vocal style and legendary

appeal. The show has been entertaining audiences of all ages and musical tastes, and was one of the top ten shows produced across the country in 1998.

"Always ... Patsy Cline" opens with two weeks of half-price previews beginning Feb. 23. Open-ended runs begins Wednesday, March 8.

Tickets for "Always ... Patsy Cline" are available at the Gem and Century box office (313) 963-9800, and all Ticketmaster loca-

tions, (248) 645-6666. Preview tickets range from \$12.25 to \$17.25; regular run tickets \$24.50 to \$34.50.

Theatre/dinner packages are available at the adjoining Century Club Restaurant. Visit the Gem Theatre online at www.gemtheatre.com

The Gem and Century Theatres are located in the heart of Detroit's burgeoning entertainment district. Built in 1903 by noted architect George D. Mason

and recently restored by Detroit developer Chuck Forbes, the Century Club building now houses a 200-seat theater, fine-dining restaurant and banquet facility. In 1997, the Gem and Century building was moved from its former location and transported to the corner of Madison Avenue and Brush. The 1,850 foot, five-block journey made history, breaking the 1986 Guinness Book world record as the heaviest building ever moved on wheels.

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them in the form of colored casino chips. Players who walk away with larger piles of the blue, black and red chips than they started with often belong to the winner family but the measure is not entirely accurate.

For the true paternity test, knowing players and dealers alike look to manners for the final say.

"I've seen big winners be big losers and big losers be big winners just based on the way they choose to conduct themselves," Koch said.

One of her first lessons in casino etiquette came in 1980 when Koch and a friend took a short getaway vacation to the country's mecca of legalized gam-

bling, Las Vegas.

Just 24 at the time, Koch recalls the excitement she felt as she placed herself in the comfortable players chair and took her first look at the deep green felt of the blackjack table. Several of her first hands were relatively simple transactions — dealer gives cards, player loses money.

Blackjack is a singular sport. It pits player against dealer. The sport uses only two pieces of equipment, cards and cash. Both are to be revered by the players.

ing that trip but she came away with something more valuable — knowledge.

Waiting in the airport for her return flight to Michigan, Koch purchased a book about blackjack and read it cover to cover. On her next trip she knew the basics of the game. On her next five trips, she began to learn the highs and lows of the gaming life.

Stories telling of the embarrassment and frustration felt by players breaking this rule can be found in various Internet chat rooms where people tell of the highs and lows of the gaming

ArticBear posted a tale of his own brush against casino management when a dealer at an Atlantic City casino rebuffed him for attempting to take an empty seat at a blackjack table before the deck had been completely dealt through.

In a response posting from the Wizard of Odds, ArticBear learned the rebuff was a rarity but may have meant the house was concerned that he was attempting to cheat.

"Many casinos have rules against mid entry," Koch said.

"Imagine I'm sitting at a table for a while playing only the minimum bet. My big bankroll partner stands nearby. When the deck turns positive, I signal him to come over and plunge in with a big bet."

MGM's philosophy asks newly-entering players to sit patiently until a hand has been played before attempting to break into blackjack gurus.

Seats are open to all, but new or inexperienced players are advised to beware of the farthest seat from the left, known as third base.

New players in this seat often catch the wrath of others when they make improper card choices.

In terms of odds, the Wizard believes an inexperienced player in any seat at a blackjack table has as much chance of helping the overall odds as hurting them.

A player approaching one of Koch's tables looking to exchange a handful of bills for some casino chips while a hand is being dealt will understand soon that money is not to be exchanged until play has stopped.

In some casinos, blackjack hands are dealt face down and players are asked to touch cards with only one hand. MGM uses an all face up system so players are asked not to touch cards at all.

Communicating with a dealer is a nonverbal matter. A knuckle knocked on the table is the signal for another card. An open hand waving over the table indicates a player wishes no more cards.

In the end, new and experienced players alike would do best to remember the No. 1 rule of the game. Don't bet unless you are willing to lose.

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ART IN THE COMMUNITY

LIVONIA ARTS COMMISSION
"Looking Back/Facing Forward," an exhibition of paintings and drawings by Toni Stevens continues through Monday, Jan. 31 at the Livonia Civic Center Library Fine Arts Gallery, 32777 Five Mile Road, east of Farmington

Road. Exhibit hours are 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday-Thursday, until 5 p.m. Friday-Saturday, and 1-5 p.m. Sunday.

POPLAND: A CELEBRATION OF ART AND CULTURE The Plymouth Community Arts Council's Cultural Diversity Series continues with Polish art, dance and food 1-3 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 30 at the Joanne Winkelman Hulce Center for the Arts, 774 N. Sheldon at Junction, Plymouth.

Sample Polish food and pastries, prepared by Three Brothers Restaurant and the culinary students at Plymouth Salem and Plymouth Canton high schools at 1 p.m., and enjoy a performance by the Wawel Dancers at 2 p.m. Meet artist Marian Owczarski whose works will be on display until Wednesday, March 1. Exhibit hours are 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday-Thursday, until 9 p.m. Wednesday, until noon, Thursday-Friday. Call (734) 416-4278 for more information.

ANN ARBOR ART CENTER GALLERY Through Feb. 19, "Collective Memories," work of artists Linda Soberman and Jennifer Martin at 117 W. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Call (734) 994-8004.

GREENFIELD VILLAGE The Livonia Arts Commission is looking for exhibitors for its 24th annual Juried Art Festival — Art in the Village, Saturday-Sunday, June 10-11 at Greenfield Village in Livonia. Deadline for entry is Friday, Feb. 11. For an application, call Livonia Community Resources Department at (734) 466-2540. Canton Township is also seeking artists for its ninth annual Fine Art and Fine Craft Show at Liberty Fest June 24-25 in Heritage Park.

Deadline for application is April 15. Call (734) 453-3710. In addition, any art student in middle or high school in the Plymouth Canton Schools can display and sell their wares in a student booth for free.

BOHEMIANS MUSIC COMPETITION Deadline for the third annual Solo Concerto Competition for orchestral instruments is April 1. Prizes are \$500-\$1500 and Wayne State University will match each prize with a scholarship should winners decide to further their musical education at WSU. High school and college students (between ages 16 and 22) throughout Michigan are eligible.

Submit tape to Herbert Couf, President, c/o The Bohemians, 37685 Russell Drive, Farmington Hills, 48331. E-mail for further info to CourtLink@aol.com.

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