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chuck. "I don't know if mind-expanding would fit. In *The Session*, James snaps and wages war against the woodchuck terrorizing him. His wife comes home and finds him in army fatigues trying to kill the woodchuck. The whole evening is about insanity and reality and the subjective nature of that. The funny thing is, since I wrote the play, people have been telling me these stories about moles, woodchucks and other animals in their backyards.

"The second comedy, *Cage Din*, is more complicated," said Lawler, a 23-year old guitar teacher at the Herb David studio in Ann Arbor. "It takes place in a mental institution where Sam is a patient. Again it's all about what we perceive as reality, what we perceive as mental illness. These people might be tuned in to something we aren't."

Mosaic Youth Theater

In a way, Annette Madias and the Mosaic Youth Theatre are questioning a different reality in *Crossing 8 Mile*, an updated version of Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* June 22-25. The group, representing 46 middle and high schools in the tri-county area, acted out the story of two sets of twins separated at birth at Music Hall in early May. The play is set on a distant planet named Tioried-Ortem (metro Detroit spelled backwards). The original music is written by students.

"In our version, one of the twins is raised in the city, one in the suburbs. At 17, they meet up again at this mall," said Madias, a Livonia resident and managing director of Mosaic. "We play off the idea of 8 Mile. A great volcano formed an eight-mile-wide crater that people were afraid to cross. It plays up the stereotypes we have of the city and suburbs."

"What we found most interesting to us as we were developing it is the kids didn't want it to be a play about black and white but regional and economic issues. The masks are vibrant colors, so

Schedule

- *The Session and Cage Din*, one-act comedies - June 15-17, 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Sunday, June 18
- *Crossing 8 Mile* by Mosaic Youth Theatre - June 22-25
- *Terpsichore's Kitchen*, Dancing in Summer - June 29-July 2
- *Living Lies in Rome*, modern/Elizabethan blend of comedy by Jeremy Anderson - July 6-16
- *The Taming of Shakespeare's Shrew* by Brass Tacks Ensemble - July 20-30
- *Science Friction* by Joseph Zettelmeier - Aug. 3-13
- *Vital Signs* by Jane Martin - Aug. 17-27, 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 20

characters are not defined by color or where they've been brought up. That's exactly the premise on which Rick Sperling founded Mosaic Youth Theater in 1992. He wanted to bring together "different racial and ethnic groups" to create a mosaic of young people who probably wouldn't develop relationships with each other. The program is free, so student entry is not based on economic status but merit.

More than 200 students audition every year to become part of Mosaic Youth Ensemble and its nine-month training program with theater professionals. Several local actors trained in commedia dell'arte, an Italian form of masked theater dating back more than 500 years, worked with students to develop a style they call hip hop commedia.

"Like Mosaic, *Crossing 8 Mile* is a play where kids become friends in ways that they really never imagined," said Sperling who came up with the idea for Mosaic during his years as director of education and outreach at the Attie Theater.

"Stereotypes and barriers are broken down. They're talking about how their friends can't cross 8 Mile. It's become an audience favorite with teenagers as well as adults because it deals with an issue that's very powerful to everyone. It starts to pierce and turn those stereotypes on their heads. We equally make fun of the city and suburbs."

Sperling hopes potential theater-goers won't shy away from attending the production because it's put on by people ranging in age from 12 to 19. Mosaic is an accomplished troupe of actors, singers, writers and technicians. In 1998, they received the Governors' Award for Art and Culture, and the "Coming Up Taller" award presented by the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts in 1999. Mosaic's illustrious track record includes trips to Denmark, New York and Florida.

Two days after *Crossing 8 Mile* closes, they return to Europe as U.S. representatives of the International Amateur Theatre Association at festivals in London and Copenhagen. Upon their return, the theater is offering a summer program with Marygrove College for ages 8-18. Call (313) 554-1422 for information or to register.

"We want to diffuse the stereotypes that come with youth theater," said Sperling, who at age 4 joined the Junior Light Opera in Ann Arbor and later went on to study at New York University and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in London. "Youth theater is usually considered something less than art, but people are starting to realize there's an energy to teenage years."

No matter what you're preference though, the festival has something for everyone. Interested in women's issues? *Vital Signs* delves into the female experience with monologues on relationships, fears, love and sadness. Love modern dance? *Terpsichore's Kitchen* kicks up their heels with innovative



Woodchuck wars: Rob Sulewski (right) helps talk Ian Lawler through his problems after a woodchuck moves into his back yard.

choreography ranging from playfully energetic to moody and playful.

Jeremy Anderson revives debauchery, violence and instant love Shakespeare-style in *Living*

Lies in Rome. Not to be outdone, Brass Tacks Ensemble turns the bard's words on end in *The Taming of Shakespeare's Shrew*. "It's an exciting lineup," said Sulewski, who designed the sets

for *The Session* and *Brass Tacks* Shrew. "And this is people's last chance to see anything in the old space because they're moving come September."

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background." Digitally manipulating an image allows Adams the flexibility to pursue his personal vision. Using Photoshop and a cloning tool he copies wildflowers to cover an ugly barbed wire fence running alongside a lighthouse. "The nice thing about digital is that if there's a problem you can fix it," said Adams. "That's the reason I enjoy photography. I'm no good at drawing. If you have an artist's mind but not an artist's hand, you can still be creative with photography." The element of creativity is

what binds members of the Livonia Camera Club together. "At our regular meetings you learn from what others do," said Adams. "We also have critiques that help challenge us to take better photos." History Founded in 1976, the Livonia Camera Club offers novice and advanced photographers the opportunity to meet and discuss their particular area of interest, whether it be digital, print or slide. Preferences for color or black and white vary, but two-

thirds of the members process their own work. "I lose control of the color when I send it out," said Adams. "And sometimes with color they overprocess a photograph." If you're interested in finding out more about the Livonia Camera Club, call president Jonathan Warren at (313) 274-0912. "We're always looking for new members to show people what's available in Livonia if they're interested in photography," said Schott.

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