

THE WEEKEND

FRIDAY



Debbie Reynolds joins the Detroit Symphony Pops at Orchestra Hall, 8:30 p.m. for a concert featuring her singing and comedic talents. Tickets \$18-\$49, call (313) 576-5111.

SATURDAY



Composer/guitarist Spencer Barefield and his trio, plus an eight piece string ensemble, will perform at 8 p.m. in the Kerrytown Concert House in Ann Arbor. Tickets \$10-\$25, call (734) 769-2999.

SUNDAY



Lisa DeWaele (left to right), Daniel Roth, and Michael East star in "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," 2 p.m. at the Bonstelle Theatre on the campus of Wayne State University. Tickets \$8-\$10, call (313) 577-2960.

HOT TICKETS



Grammy Award winner Larry Gatlin stars in "The Civil War," a new American musical playing through Sunday, March 11 at the Masonic Temple Theatre in Detroit. Tickets \$19-\$55, available at the box office or call (248) 245-0800. For show times and other information, call (313) 533-2332.

'Get thee to Ann Arbor'

The Royal Shakespeare Company's staging of eight historical plays hailed by U of M and University Musical Society

BY NICOLE STAFFORD
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Even the New York Times saw a good story in a partnership between the University of Michigan, University Musical Society and Royal Shakespeare Company.

An article about the London theater company's three-week residency in Ann Arbor, and performances March 10-18 at the Power Center for the Performing Arts, appeared in the Feb. 25 edition of Sunday's Times. Regrettably, the focus was astonishing that such a prestigious show would be taking the road to Ann Arbor.

Then again, Ann Arbor, and not the Big Apple, is the only city in the United States where the prestigious company plans to perform a large portion of one of its most significant artistic undertakings—contemporary stagings of William Shakespeare's History Plays. In fact, associate director Michael Boyd's new *Richard III* is making its international debut at the Power Center.

Once more, staging the dramas, which are rarely performed in a cycle and cover England's history from the



Bardian embrace: Fiona Bell portrays Queen Margaret and Richard Dillane portrays the Duke of Suffolk in the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of *Henry VI, Part II* in Ann Arbor.

late 14th to the late 15th centuries, would not be possible without a \$2 million investment by the University of Michigan.

Bold project

"It's bold. It's a big project, but it is worthy," said UMS President Kenneth C. Fischer, who along with U of M President Lee C. Bollinger, orchestrated the venture and then worked with the arts and academic communities to develop some 70 education and outreach programs to round out the company's residency. Featured are two free public discussions, including one in which President Bollinger interviews company artistic director Adrian Noble.

"This collective effort should afford the University and the community a rich marriage of scholarship and theatrical performance," Bollinger said of the project.

What? Royal Shakespeare Company performs four of William Shakespeare's History Plays (*Henry VI, Parts I, II and III* and *Richard III*) in three complete cycles as part of three-week residency. When: March 10-18. Where: Power Center in Ann Arbor. Tickets: \$108-250 for all four plays; tickets for individual performances, if available, will be sold at the door; call UMS Box Office at (734) 764-2538 or visit www.ums.org. Information: For performance details and a full schedule of education events presented as part of the Royal Shakespeare Company's residency, visit www.umich.edu/pre/shakespeare.

And that's not an overstatement. Programs presented in an academic setting reach beyond the Ann Arbor campus to other universities and colleges, local high schools and area community groups.

Programs open to the public are extensive and include interactive workshops aimed at giving audiences a look behind the scenes, a live musical performance, a community acting workshop, several lectures and two exhibits, one of which features a leather glove reputed to have belonged to Shakespeare.

The residency is part of the first UMS International Theater Festival. The ambitious project was launched with news that the university planned not only to offer more live theater, but also build the

Arthur Miller Theater. The Power Center is also celebrating its 30th anniversary this year.

The work behind the residency program began three years ago when Fischer learned that the company was

Lectures and other events

■ **Engendering History**—Women, Gender and Shakespeare's History Plays: 12 noon Friday, March 9, Rackham Assembly Hall.

■ **From Jerkin to Jacket**—Changing Styles in Shakespearean Costume Design: 1 p.m. Sunday, March 11; 6:30 p.m. Thursday, March 15; and 1 p.m. Sunday, March 18, U of M Special Collections Library, Hatcher Graduate Library.

■ **Costuming Shakespeare's History Plays**: Features prints, photographs and drawings of costumes from productions of the History Plays since the late 18th century. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday and 10 a.m.-noon Saturday, through April 14, U of M Special Collections Library, Hatcher Graduate Library, call (734) 764-9377.

■ **Shakespeare on Campus**: Features images and documents from the many theatrical, musical, dance and scholarly interpretations of Shakespeare's works by University of Michigan drama groups, visiting performers and faculty. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday and 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Saturday, through April 30, Bentley Historical Library (North Campus), call (734) 764-3482.

■ **Keynote Interview**: University of Michigan Professor of English Ralph Williams interviews Royal Shakespeare Company Associate Director Michael Boyd. 2:30 p.m. Sunday, March 11, Rackham Auditorium, 915 E. Washington, Ann Arbor.

■ **Keynote Interview**: University of Michigan President Lee Bollinger interviews Royal Shakespeare Company Artistic Director Adrian Noble. 3-4 p.m. Sunday, March 11, Rackham Auditorium, 915 E. Washington, Ann Arbor.

■ **The Art of Acting and Directing Shakespeare**: University of Michigan Professor of Theater Leigh Woods interviews actors and directors from the Royal Shakespeare Company. 4-5:30 p.m. Friday, March 16, at the U-M Alumni Center, corner of Fletcher and E. Washington, Ann Arbor.

interested in building "relationships in the Heartland" and met with its artistic director in Washington, D.C.

"I hit it off with Adrian Noble," recalled Fischer. "And in this business, it's all about your relationships with people. So that started a series of exchanges and meetings. It wasn't clear what would be done. They needed to see our theater. They needed to know where we were, where the hell is Ann Arbor?"

Viable project

Another issue was the viability of putting on Shakespeare's History Plays. "That's when we sat down and said 'these are the History Plays, these are not the sexy plays, these are not the plays where you get the corporate sponsors.' And here Lee (Bollinger) and I are saying that's perfect. That's exactly the kind of project a university ought to be undertaking."

The approach reflects a larger philosophy toward the arts and arts programming, said Fischer. "We've learned how to develop audiences here for more obscure sorts of things. We tend to say 'it's a great art form, let's look at how we're presenting it.'"

After company members visited and gave the green light, the problem became a financial one: The company needed \$2 million to help stage the plays here and in London. "That's when things got fairly intense, when things got pretty sobering," said Fischer. "I knew this was a very challenging amount."

In the end, the UMS board agreed to proceed with the project as long as there were guarantors. "So," says Fischer, "Lee Bollinger committed both to

Please see SHAKESPEARE, C2

COMEDY

The truth, that's what comedian Jackie Mason wants to know

BY KEELY WYGNONIK
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Jackie Mason has been called "the king of Jewish insult humor," a master of the put-down.

So it is with some trepidation that I pick up the phone and dial his hotel in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. at 9 a.m., our designated interview time.

Busy signal. Relief. Dial again. Busy signal. Relief, mixed with a twinge of anxiety, did I dial the wrong number? Double check the number, dial again. This time I get through.

A soft spoken man answers the phone? Did I get the right room? "Good morn-

ing." I introduce myself, and yes, the person on the other end is the king himself, Jackie Mason.

"Why haven't you been to Detroit for 15 years? Don't you like us?" I ask. "Nobody asked me to come," he answers. "You don't make a trip just because a city has sidewalks. They have sidewalks in New York."

And we're off, talking, bantering back and forth, and laughing a lot.

One man show

Mason has some trepidation of his own about coming to Detroit (March 12-25) to present his one man show, *Jackie Mason — Much Ado About Everything!* at The Second City-Detroit Theatre.

I tell him about the redevelopment that's going on in downtown Detroit, how he won't recognize the place. He quizzes me about redevelopment, wants to know what it means. "Do you feel safe walking the streets at night," he asks. I hedge, try to duck the truth. "Why'd it take you five minutes to tell me that you don't feel comfortable walking the streets at night," he demands to know. "Maybe I should



Comedian Jackie Mason is bringing his humorous perspective on politics to the Second City Detroit Theatre.

bring a body guard."

The truth, only the truth, no matter how brutal, that's what Mason wants

to know. He's proud to be called the "king of insult humor, someone who believes you should be able to laugh at everybody and everything."

"A lot of things in life are fake," he tells me. "There's a lot of deception and unfairness in society. A lot of people aren't given a fair chance, they're disenfranchised, and it's good to have someone to stick up for them."

The son of a rabbi, Mason was born in Sheboygan, Wis., and grew up on the Lower East Side of Manhattan surrounded by rabbis.

Mason was a cantor until the age of 25 when he was ordained a rabbi. His three brothers are rabbis. His grandfather and great-grandfather were rabbis.

But Mason decided to leave the synagogue because, as he jests, "someone in the family had to make a living." Yet, there's something special about this man, almost spiritual.

He admits, "I'm preaching morality in the form of jokes. I try to make a mockery of the self-deceptions in society. I put a light up to it. I have a point

Please see MASON, B2