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CURTAIN GOING UP

By WALLY ROBERTS

"Dear Me, The Sky Is Falling" settled at the Fisher last week for a four-week stay. Gertrude Berg, resplendent as Mama Hirsh is the main attraction. Her skillful, flawless performance is a joy to behold.

Mrs. Berg's charm and sly suavity falls on the unsuspecting audience so gently and invisibly that before the play is half way through the first act, you are completely hypnotized into thinking "Sky Is" a hilarious comedy. Truth is "Sky" is a formula play. You know what's going to happen. There are few surprises—outside of the clever ending concocted by Mr. Spielgras.

Yet in spite of the obvious bones of the plot being rattled so boldly, Gertrude Berg and her fine cast of supporting actors make "Sky" an enjoyable evening in the theater. The cavernous Fisher, usually excellent for musicals, suddenly became small and intimate as this fine cast pulled out all the "acting stops."

Santa Nederland is to be complimented for booking such a stellar attraction for the holidays. The theme of a dominating mother has universal appeal and can be enjoyed by everyone.

The soap opera content of the script becomes rib-tickling material when handled by Mrs. Berg. I've always thought of her as a female Menasha Skulnik. Her "Molly Goldberg" will always remain one of the classics of the radio-TV lanes.

Her consummate skill as an actress is most evident in the handling of the riotous third act. It's a typical wild farce-type of ending. Mrs. Berg as the pivotal character quietly and with great reserve allows the storm to gather and break all around her. The resulting frantic stage business takes on added hiltarity as "Molly" tries her level best to do right by her daughter. Of course, by the final curtain everything turns out perfectly as it always does in these light-hearted, domestic comedies. Sounds banal, I know, but take a chance on this attraction at the Fisher—it's a real sleeper!

You'll see a great deal of "The Sky Is Falling" in coming years since it's a perfect community theater play. At the Fisher the switching between the psychiatrist's office and Molly's home is accomplished with the flick of an eyelash. Scene changes in as modern and complete theatrical plant as the Fisher are never a problem. When community theaters attempt this play, they had better consult a good scene designer in their group. The dual set offers some real problems.

As the bell tolls the end of 1964, the theatrical world can look back at a few highlights: Zero Mostel in "Fiddler in the Roof," Richard Burton in "Hamlet," "Any Wednesday," "Barefoot In The Park," Sammy Davis in "Golden Boy," the APA group in Ann Arbor with four fine productions ("Man and Superman," "Judith," "The Hostage," and "War and Peace"). Incidentally, the APA folks have received the highest praise possible for their "Man and Superman" production. Many critics have suggested that they replace the New York Lincoln Center Repertory group.

The final curtain came down for many fine performers: Sean O'Casey, Brendan Behan, Ben Hecht, Cole Porter, Eddie Cantor, Harpo Marx, Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Carol Haxey and Diana Wynyard. The stage, screen, and TV tube will miss the talents of these performers as well as members of the nation's audiences.

Looking ahead to 1965, the local scene will jump into action soon after the New Year with the opening of the Hilberry Classic Theater: "The Taming of the Shrew." "Shrew" opens on Jan. 6. "Macbeth" follows on Jan. 13. The Classic Theater has undergone some renovations and will present a dressed-up look for its patrons. The 518 seats will still offer a closeness and intimacy seldom found in most of our Detroit theaters. It's not too late to apply for a season ticket for all four productions at the Classic Theater's second season.

During the holidays and continuing until Jan. 30 will be the Masque Theater's production of "Cat On The Hot Tin Roof." Ace Azar's and Bill Patent's fiery acting dominate the Masque stage. Their dynamic second act colloquy is well worth a trip downtown to the Hotel Wolverine. The show will be playing until the end of January.

The University of Michigan Professional Theater Program will present four Broadway productions in the Hill Auditorium when "Luther" arrives in Ann Arbor on Jan. 20. Last week I mentioned the fine quality of this production and indicated you could catch it in Ann Arbor. I goofed on the date. My first reports had the show arriving on Jan. 26. Let me assure you that I was wrong. "Luther" will play a one night stand on Jan. 20. My advice: get your tickets immediately.

In fact, the entire season ("Luther," "Beyond the Fringe," "Spoon River" and "Oliver") may be reserved by the purchase of a season subscription. By buying tickets to all four of these outstanding attractions, you will be assured of a seat plus a major discount on your ticket. Executive Director Robert Schnitzer informs me that the tickets are disappearing quite fast. Many folks have been wise enough to give season tickets for Christmas gifts.

THE BILLBOARD

FISHER—"DEAR ME, THE SKY IS FALLING" — Gertrude "Molly" Berg via a gesture or two can bring down the house with laughter. A real artist at work. You have three more weeks to secure tickets.

CLASSIC THEATER—"TAMING OF THE SHREW" — Opens on January 6. To be joined in repertory by "Macbeth," "Oedipus Rex," and "Galileo."

MASQUE THEATER — "CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF" — Raw, rough drama on the mezzanine floor of the Hotel Wolverine. Plays weekends until Jan. 30.

U OF D THEATER — "ANTIGONE" and "SCHOOL FOR WIVES"—last chance to see these two excellent productions. Will open for final repertory performances on Jan. 7. Final performance Jan. 10.

Hillside Plans African Meal New Year's Eve

If you can't go on a safari, why not let the Hillside Inn on Plymouth Road bring the safari to you. The Hillside Inn often imports wild game meat such as Elk, Buffalo, and Moose.

This New Year's Eve the Hillside will be serving Roast African Lion, along with their other entrees. The meat can be compared to veal, and it has a light delicate flavor. Traditionally, it is served in a Burgundy Sauce.

If you aren't planning on going to Africa in the near future, this may be your opportunity to taste some of their finest meat.

WALLY TABER filming "Tiger Land." The adventure film will be shown at the Plymouth High School gym on Jan. 12.

Wally Taber Film to Be Shown in Plymouth

Three jumps ahead of the civil war in the Belgian Congo and scarcely two jumps ahead of the Red Chinese invasion of India, globe-girdling, high-adventure photographer Wally Taber continues to carry the proverbial rabbit's foot as he returns to the Plymouth area on another of his annual show tours.

Bringing with him a pair of films which critics have acclaimed his finest yet, the popular film raconteur presents his double-header living-color-film program at Plymouth High School gym Jan. 12 at 8 p.m.

"We've sponsored a lot of entertainment as club-charity promotions," Art Roberts, B.P.O.E. 1780, Plymouth, exalted ruler, said. "But none has proved as year-in, year-out popular as the Wally Taber Safari Shows.

"This year Taber combines unexplored Mexico with unknown India to turn out an evening's entertainment that long will be remembered by the whole family. Everything from jumping beans to jaguar and sardines to swordfish Taber found in our next-door neighbor's domain south of the border down Mexico way.

"Atop hunting elephant, astraddle Jeep, squatted on machans, bouncing along in ox carts are but a few of the extremes to which Taber went to capture the amazing film 'Tiger Land' which he now brings here.

"Equally wild was the Mexican adventure that went into 'Jaguar Country,'" Roberts admonished. "No doubt, Taber has triumphed again and our club is delighted to be able to bring both the program and Wally Taber in person to our community."

CONFUSED

Most people who jump at conclusions spend most of their lives up in the air.

Four Students from Area Join Chorus at U. of D.

Four area residents were recently accepted into the University of Detroit Chorus.

Janice Krupansky, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Krupansky of 26446 West Chicago, Redford Township, is a freshman majoring in biology. She is a graduate of Holy Redeemer High School.

Susan Marsh, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas R. Marsh of 11351 Mayfield, Livonia, is a sophomore in the College of Arts and Sciences. She is an English major.

The daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Gerard P. Nolan of 25759 Ridgewood, Farmington, Maureen Nolan is a sophomore history major. She is a 1963 graduate of Our Lady of Sorrows High School.

James Goebel, son of Mr. and Mrs. William Goebel of 14010 Berwick, Livonia, is a senior in the College of Commerce and Finance. A graduate of Our Lady of Sorrows High School, he is majoring in economics.

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