

HIRSCH ON THEATER

Producer 'Revealed' by Son

By SAMUEL HIRSCH
Joseph Beruh's name as a producer may not be so well-known to the general public as, say, David Merrick's or Hal Prince's. But his 25-year record in the theater as a stage manager and general manager has firmly established him as one of the most active workers in the off-Broadway field in New York.

His most recent show is "Godspell," which he co-produced with Edgar Lansbury and Stuart Duncan. It opened off-Broadway last year to enthusiastic notices and since then has had the same response in Los Angeles, Toronto, Chicago, San Francisco and at Boston's Wilbur Theater. A London company and one in Paris also are flourishing.

I'VE BEEN producing for years," Beruh said in the H.-T. drama office, "but I just started putting my name on things two years ago. My son, who's 8, wanted to know, if I was such a big shot in the professional theater, why my name didn't appear on programs and posters. Until then, I'd never been interested in glory. Since David asked me that, I started using my name on my shows."

The 47-year-old producer is a graduate of Carnegie Tech, the drama school that produced the first version of "Godspell." It was a school project for John-Michael Tebelak, a 22-year-old student director at the Pittsburgh school.

"When I heard about a show based on the Bible, I

thought they were out of their minds," he said. "I could have gone to see it, but turned it down. Actually, I was once interested in doing 'Jesus Christ Superstar' on Broadway but we didn't get the show. Later, when Tebelak staged 'Godspell' at Cafe La Mama, I took a look at it and thought it showed a lot of imagination."

HE MET WITH the director and agreed to produce it if they could find a composer. He suggested Stephen Schwartz, whose songs he's heard at an audition of a new show, and after 21 phone calls tracked him down. Schwartz agreed and finished the score in four weeks. The rest is theater history.

"What does 'Godspell' say? I think the show bridges the generation gap, whatever that is. The older generation accepts the philosophy of the show. So does the younger crowd. It takes everything back to beginning and, since everybody's trying to find a starting point, it's just what they're searching for. It gives them The Man.

"If the world were willing to listen to The Man's teaching, we'd have a true brotherhood. 'Superstar' doesn't believe as deeply as this show does. Tebelak really wrote his own Mass. He's a deeply religious young man—and this show is a celebration of his beliefs."

Beruh and his partners have two new shows in preparation. Due to open off-Broadway April is Paul Foster's "Elizabeth," a modern treatment of

the Queen Elizabeth I and Mary Stuart story in blank verse. It is being staged by Tebelak, and will have music by David Spangler.

A NEW MUSICAL, "Comedy," by Larry Carrs, with music by Hugo and Luigi and lyrics by George Weiss, is scheduled to open May 17 at a small Broadway theater. It is a commedia dell'arte story of a shipwreck that's been adapted by the author, called by Beruh, "probably the foremost living authority on the Italian commedia form."

"I think the theater's undergoing a basic change," he said, a short, round man with a happy face. "Godspell" is part of that change. Ibsen's been dead for 20 years and the definitive American musical, 'Hello, Dolly!', has had its day, too.

"We need new producers. The kids have to take over the theater. Dynamic David Merrick has had his hand on the pulse and has come up with six big ones each year for a number of years. He's not doing that now—not because he's lost his touch, but because the public's taste has changed. For instance, I don't think he likes 'Godspell.' He didn't like 'Hair,' either.

"We were the only producing firm interested in doing 'Godspell.' There aren't that many good shows available. We read lots of scripts. I go through 10 a week, looking for something that suits my taste.

"MEANWHILE, I continue to make a living working in the theater. What else would I do at this point? Occasional-ly, a 'Godspell' comes along and that's a blessing. And my son sees his father's name in print, so that makes me a real producer, I suppose."

'Last Picture Show' Gets 8 Nominations

"The Last Picture Show," now in its fifth month at Loews Abbey Cinema I, was nominated for eight Academy Awards, including "Best Picture," "Best Director," "Best screenplay," "Best Cinematography," "Best Supporting Actress" to Ellen Burstyn and Cloris Leachman, and "Best Supporting Actor," to both Jeff Bridges and Ben Johnson. "The Last Picture Show," recently was honored with three awards by the New York Film Critics, and was the hit of this year's New York Festival. Starring Timothy Bottoms, Jeff Bridges, Ellen Burstyn, Ben Johnson, Cloris Leachman and Cybill Shepherd, the film directed by Peter Bogdanovich was written from a screenplay by Bogdanovich and McMurty based on McMurty's novel.

Theater Tonight

"GOSPELL"—At the Wilbur. A rock musical, suggested by the Gospel according to St. Matthew. Today at 7 and 7:30 p.m.
"HAIR"—At the Colonial. Road company of longrunning Broadway musical hit in town for two weeks. Opens tonight at 7:30.
"PROMISES, PROMISES"—At the Schubert for one week. The Neil Simon-Burt Bacharach Broadway hit based on Billy Wilder's "The Apartment." Today at 7 and 7:30 p.m.
"THE ME NOBODY KNOWS"—At the Open Circle Theater. The Broadway hit with original cast members. A rock musical based on the writings of New York City school children ages 7-18. Today at 2 and 7:30.

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GEORGE C. SCOTT tries to calm an hysterical patient who is sure that this Indian medicine man has been dancing all night near his bed in "The Hospital," now at the Sack Cinema 57.

Clubs: Davis Slips Quietly into Town

By CHARLES GIULIANO

With a break in the weather, club activity has picked up around town. The spring season and its rush of concerts will soon pick-up.

Lennie Sogaloff must be credited with keeping a secret. Miles Davis is appearing in Danvers all this week at Lennie's and he has never slipped into town more silently.

Today, Miles still continues to be the most important voice of change in Jazz. His groups over the years have always been pioneering and that is no less true today. The current group is essentially the same with Gary Bartz on reeds, Keith Jarrett piano and Michael Henderson on bass.

IN HIS LAST FEW appearances the rhythm section seems to have changed. Miles's drummer Jack De Johnette has gone off to form his own group, "Compost," which I saw in New York. His new group is recording for Columbia and should do well. In the meantime, there is a big hole in Miles's sound which he is filling with a drummer, conga player and percussionist.

Tonight, a most unusual attraction opens at the Passim. Townes Van Zandt is almost a legendary name in music circles. He is a talented writer and performer, who is best known for some collaborations with Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys. Where Wil-

son's primary gift is for melodies, Van Zandt supplied lyrics that tried to take the Beach Boys beyond their surfer image.

Intown at the Jazz Workshop, all this week, Jimmy Smith is playing the organ. George Wein has often stated that Jimmy Smith is one of the country's best musicians for conducting jam sessions. Jimmy has released a great number of albums over the years and is one of the great jazz organists. On the other side of the club complex in Paul's Mall, Clara Ward prevails with her brand of soul music.

THIS SUNDAY at the Orpheum Theater, at long last, we will again hear the Kinks. Many critics have placed the Kinks latest album, "Muswell Hillbillies," on their top-ten lists of 1971. In fact, the Kinks are one of the longest lasting of the original English groups which surfaced after the Beatles invasion of 1964. You might say that I have been a Kinks fan for years and share my pleasure this Sunday. Also on the bill, which is presented by Don Law, will be Fairport Convention and Lindesfarne.

Frank Connelly is excited about his super magic-show, which is coming to the Fenway Theater this Tuesday. Frank proclaims that this is really a show to see but warns that it is not for the squeamish.

'Theatre Centre' Day Proclaimed For Hub

Mayor Kevin White has proclaimed Thursday, March 2, "Hub Theater Centre Day" on the occasion of the HTC's 500th performance. In addition to the Centre's 40 separate productions staged since October '67, there is a touring unit, bringing a specially created program to audiences of Senior Citizens, which the Massachusetts Council on the Arts announced this January they were funding for the second season.

Since HTC started in the Old West Church in January 1968, it has presented plays from every major genre of the past century and has offered representative playwrights from six major countries. Besides the weekly shows at their Government Center location, the Hub Theater Centre has toured elementary schools, YMCA's, colleges, community organizations, nursing homes, and Senior Citizen housing projects, bringing programs especially designed for each audience.

The Hub Theater Centre's artistic director, Rosann M. Weeks, has created a contemporary worship service which "celebrates life." Using readings that draw parallels between the seasons of the year

and the seasons of one's existence, "Celebration of Life" touches on the spiritual and the physical, birth, marriage, and death, with lots of songs, accompanied by guitar, auto-harp, dulcimer, and recorder.

HTC's numbers of various productions over the past six theater seasons make them Boston's largest single producer of plays for that period. The Hub Theater Centre's current production of Garcia Lorca's The Love of Don Perlimplin & Belisa in the Garden concerns itself with the pitfalls of May-December marriage and the use of original music throughout the program, the show appeals to all ages.

Concerts Planned on Four Days

Bonanza for Dance Lovers

By VALERIE RESTIVO

The weekend will start early for Boston's dance lovers, who can enjoy four days of dance, beginning with Dame Margot Fonteyn's appearance at Music Hall Thursday. She will dance the role of Aurora in "The Sleeping Beauty," accompanied by the National Ballet of Washington. The concert marks Dame Margot's 33rd year as the Princess Aurora, a feat unequalled by any other ballerina.

Alvin Ailey's American Dance Theater will have an important three-day showing at John Hancock Hall Friday and Saturday evenings and Sunday afternoon. Each concert will feature different works, including several which premiered in New York this season.

THE MOST RECENT works are "Myth" and "Mary Lou's Mass," both of which saw their first performances in December. "Myth" is set to Igor Stravinsky's "Symphonies of Wind Instruments," which the composer described as "an austere ritual." The music is dedicated to the memory of Debussy. "Mary Lou's Mass," subtitled "Dances of Praise," is a folk Mass composed by Mary Lou Williams and performed by Miss Williams and trio.

'The Trojan Women' Due At Pi Alley

"The Trojan Women," starring four of the most acclaimed actresses of any generation—Katharine Hepburn, Vanessa Redgrave, Genevieve Bujold and Irene Papas—will open Friday in its New England premiere engagement at the Pi Alley Theatre.

Sack Theaters by a special arrangement with Cinerama Releasing Corp., has arranged for a special student rate for groups of 40 or more. For additional information and reservations, contact Sack Theaters Group Sales Representative at 542-2323.

The Michael Cacoyannis film, produced, directed and written by Cacoyannis, adapted from the great play by Euripides which was first presented in Greece in 415 B.C., is the dramatic story of the fall of Troy and the tragic fates of the Trojan women and children.

Katharine Hepburn, the only actress to have won three Academy Awards and to be nominated for a total of 11, stars as Hecuba, Queen of Troy, with Vanessa Redgrave as Andromache, Genevieve Bujold as Cassandra and Irene Papas as Helen of Troy. Patrick Magee of Britain's Royal Shakespeare Company, and Brian Blessed, are featured.

Greek film-maker Cacoyannis is best known for having brought such film classics as "Electra," "The Girl in Black" and "Zorba the Greek" to the screen. Music for "The Trojan Women" is by composer-musician Mikis Theodorakis, who has scored such films as "Zorba the Greek" and "Z." "The Trojan Women" is his first motion picture project since release from prison last year in his native Greece.

with the company of dancers. Other works from 1971 are "Flowers," with Linda Kent soloing, "Cry," a work dedicated to black women and danced by Judith Jamison (one of the company's most distinguished dancers), and "Choral Dances," to the music of Benjamin Britten.

OLDER WORKS on the program include the now famous "Revelations," "Blues Suite," and "Streams," the most abstract piece in the current repertoire, choreographed to composer Miloslav Kabelac's "Eight Inventions" for percussion ensemble.

"Time Out of Mind" is the only work in the three-day program not choreographed by Alvin Ailey. This modern ballet was commissioned in 1972 by the Harkness Foundation for the Jeffrey Ballet Company, and has already received considerable critical

attention. Sara Yarborough and Hector Mercado will dance the leading roles in Friday's performance.

IF YOU WANT a respite from the Boston concerts, you might travel to the suburbs. Michael Babatunde Olatunji's dance company will perform in Alumnae Hall at Wellesley College Friday evening at 8. The performance of African music and dance is open to the public without charge. Olatunji was born in Nigeria; he came to the United States in 1950 to study at Morehouse College in Atlanta. In 1967 he founded the Olatunji Center for African Culture in New York City, from which his dance company is drawn.

From classical ballet to ancient tribal dance to the modern ballet-jazz-folk inspirations of Ailey, it promises to be a long, rich weekend of dance.

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