

'House of Blue Leaves' opens tonight

Production features 60s life

By ELIZABETH LYNCH
Staff Writer

The curtain will rise at 8 p.m. tonight for the opening production of *The House of Blue Leaves* at the Longstreet Theatre.

The comedy/drama will be a predominantly undergraduate production, said student director Elise Wilkins, a junior drama major.

Wilkins said *The House of Blue Leaves* plot includes everything from an adulterous affair, a visit from the pope, the Vietnam War and the swallowing of hearing aids.

"The play is a comedy. However, it has underlining themes with serious endings. It's about humiliation and how far we will go to avoid it," Wilkins said.

The play takes place in Queens, N.Y., in 1965. The main focus of the show follows the life of struggling songwriter Artie Shaughnessy, performed by sophomore media arts major Stephano Andreas.

"Artie has confidence in his ability as a songwriter, but he's trapped in Queens because of his love for his wife and his fear of leaving," Andreas said.

Andreas said he believes *The House of Blue Leaves* is especially appropriate for college students. "Just like Artie, we all have a fear of the unknown and an ignorance of what's available out there in life," he said.

Other characters in the play include Bananas, Artie's wacky wife; Bunny, a gum popping, brassy New Yorker; a bomb-making 17-year old; Corrina, an almost deaf actress; Corrina's husband Billy and three beer-drinking nuns.

Wilkins said it is symbolic that the play is situated in Queens during the 1960s. "John Guarre (the playwright) chose this setting because in the '60s, many families moved to Queens with the hopes of eventually moving to Manhattan. These people wanted to move up to a better lifestyle, just like Artie in the play," she said.

The House of Blue Leaves is funded by Student

Government and sponsored by the Experimental Theatre Organization.

"The ETO has been in existence for three years. It gives the undergraduates the opportunity to participate in the theater experience much like this," Wilkins said.

Wilkins said it is rare for undergraduates to have the chance to perform in the large Longstreet Theatre. Most undergraduate productions are performed at the considerably smaller theater on Benson Street.

The play involves more than 25 students. "At times it was hard being the student director, especially when it came to directing my peers and telling them what to do when we are the same age. Luckily, everybody has been really good about trusting my decision," Wilkins said.

Wilkins said directing *The House of Blue Leaves* was like a dream come true. "Directing a play is like seeing a life-form going from script and growing to life. Everyone is very proud of the work; I can't believe it's really going to happen," Wilkins said.

The play has special meaning to both the star and director. While in high school at the Fine Arts Center in Greenville, Andreas and Wilkins had leading roles in *The House of Blue Leaves*.

Due to theatrical differences, the show was forced to close down just weeks before opening night. "The play almost got there. It never got its full glory, and this is my attempt to bring it back," Wilkins said.

"I think we're all ready to go and will do a good job. We've been rehearsing for six weeks and are ready for opening night," Andreas said.

The House of Blue Leaves will run at Longstreet Theatre tonight and Saturday only. Curtain goes up at 8 p.m. and tickets are \$3 for students and senior citizens and \$5 for adults.



Boolie Werthan (Dan Akroyd) stands with his mother, Southern matron Daisy Werthan (Jessica Tandy) in the film *Driving Miss Daisy*, which opens at Columbia theatres soon.

Beat the Clock! takes the stage for CPU dance

By OCTAVIA WRIGHT
Staff writer

At the first Carolina Program Union's Christmas dance tonight, USC students will be taken on a musical journey back through the halls of time.

The Top 40 musical group Beat the Clock! will perform songs like Carol King's "It's Too Late" and Doby Gary's "Drift Away."

Even though the band does remakes, the songs are rearranged by its members. Singer and songwriter David Sanders said, "We call our version of 'Drift Away' 'Best Boys.' We give it a funky sound like The E. U. Band with added brass."

The band concentrates on a variety of Top 40 music specifically for their concerts. "We do Tone Loc, Steve Winwood, Paula Abdul and Jody Watley among others. Our goal is to keep people on the dance floor," Sanders said.

However, the band had to make several changes in order to support their variety. For example, three years ago the band was all-male and was originally called Thin Man. "At the time, Madonna, Jody Watley and other female singers were very popular. So, we thought that it would be a good idea to have a female singer," Sanders said.

The female members he speaks of are M'Lissa Richardson, principal female singer, and Lisa Miller on the sound board. According to Sanders, they've given the band a new sort of chemistry.

Even though the band focuses on remakes for their concerts, a promotional album of original material is currently in the works. "We're basically compiling things and finding more songs and selecting the ones that we're going to put on the album," Sanders said.

Sanders and Fred Hudson, the principal male singer, and other members work together to come up with their own unique sound. "I write classical rock music like the early Genesis and Steve Winwood or Boz Skaggs," Sanders said.

USC students may get a chance to hear one of their originals during a slow groove tonight. "We have pulled out some of our original ballads in dances. We're usually able to get away with it better that way," Sanders said.

The show is scheduled to begin at 9 p.m. and end at 1 a.m. in the Russell House Ballroom. Refreshments will be provided, and admission is free. The program is being sponsored by CPU's Contemporary Sounds Committee and the Freshman Council.

Lansbury to do 'Murder, She Wrote' for seventh season

By The Associated Press

● LOS ANGELES — Another mystery has been solved.

Angela Lansbury has agreed to return for a seventh season in CBS's highest-rated entertainment show, "Murder, She Wrote."

Miss Lansbury had not planned to return for 1990-91, but CBS reached an agreement for next season, said Howard Stringer, president of the CBS Broadcast Group.

"Murder, She Wrote," in which Lansbury plays a mystery novelist who keeps happening upon murders, is CBS' only hit entertainment show. Usually, Miss Lansbury's show and "60 Minutes" are the only CBS shows to make the 20 top shows in the A.C. Nielsen Co. ratings.

Her return is so important to CBS that the network has granted her enormous concessions. The agreement calls for Lansbury's production company to develop a series for next season that she won't be appearing in.

To get her to return for the current season, CBS financed the establishment of her production company and said she only had to

People in the news

appear in 13 episodes. She makes brief appearances in nine other episodes, which are essentially pilots for other series.

● MILAN, Italy — Maurizio Gucci, chairman of the Italian luxury goods company Guccio Gucci SPA, has been found innocent of attempted fraud by a Milan appeals court.

In November 1988, Gucci was given a one-year suspended prison term and a fine of \$760 after being convicted of tax fraud. He also was ordered to pay inheritance tax on shares of Gucci he had received from his father, Rodolfo.

The Milan court had ruled that Maurizio Gucci arranged the forgery of his father's signature on the documents, giving him the

shares, to make it appear that the transfer took place before Rodolfo Gucci's death in 1983. The lower court said Gucci was trying to evade inheritance taxes.

But the appeals court ruled Wednesday that Gucci and six others accused with him didn't commit the crime.

● LOS ANGELES — Comedian Milton Berle had dental surgery at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and was in good shape, a spokesman said.

Berle, 81, underwent surgery on Tuesday and remained hospitalized Wednesday, said hospital spokesman Ron Wise.

"He felt he wanted to stay overnight," Wise said.

Berle, known to millions as "Mr. Television" and as the star of his own variety show during the medium's Golden Age, had quadruple bypass heart surgery in 1985.

● LONDON — Former first lady Nancy Reagan had tea with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher at the British leader's official 10 Downing St. residence.

The wife of former President Reagan is in

Britain promoting her book, *My Turn*.

A spokesman for Thatcher said Reagan's 45-minute visit Wednesday was "a private call." He gave no details on their conversation.

● DALLAS — Dr. J is ready to operate again — but this time as an owner.

Julius Erving, who dazzled National Basketball Association fans for 16 years with his high-flying dunk shots, has notified league Commissioner David Stern that if a franchise becomes available, he would like to be considered for ownership.

Erving and business partner Bruce Llewellyn purchased a Coca-Cola bottling plant in Philadelphia shortly after Erving retired from the 76ers. The two have several other business interests.

"I would be interested in being part of a good situation," Erving said in Dallas at an athletic forum Tuesday. "My partner and I are interested in owning a basketball team, but the timing has to be right, and the deal has to be right."

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