

a.m. MAGAZINE

ENTERTAINMENT

MUSICALS, MUSICALS AND MORE MUSICALS

Strike up the band, grab your straw hat and cane. The summer theater season is upon us.

Summer theater? Even though you still may have the heat turned on, the trees are budding and spring is upon us, it's time to take a look at what's coming up on the straw hat circuit. Schedules have been firming up, the brochures printed and ticket orders are being taken. Hey, that's show biz.

Bucks County Playhouse in New Hope has gotten the jump on everybody. It opened Monday with an Easter presentation of "Jesus Christ Superstar," which runs through this weekend. Shawnee Playhouse in the Poconos isn't far behind. It opens Tuesday with "They're Playing Our Song." Pocono Playhouse opens the last week in May.

This year, there are some significant

changes on the region's straw hat circuit — probably more so than in any other season since the mid-'70s. One familiar name is gone — Guthrie Playhouse. A new name is making its bow — Peddler's Village Dinner Theatre. A familiar name — Pocono Playhouse — has changed hands.

The 16 or so theater groups are again emphasizing musicals, musicals and more musicals. There will even be multiple productions of the more popular shows at different theaters — "They're Playing Our Song," "The Pirates of Penzance," "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat," "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas" and "Annie" (a full summer theater schedule, as of press time, is listed below).

The reason for the preponderance of musicals has to do with the preferences of summer theatergoers who want a light, entertaining evening out. What better way than with a dinner and a show — all singing, all dancing, all fun?

Some theater managers poll their patrons, asking them what shows they'd like to see and then tailor the season to order. "All our shows this summer have been those most re-

quested by our theatergoers," says Gina Bertucci, publicist for Shawnee.

Summer theatergoers also like to ogle big-name stars. At Bucks County Playhouse, you'll see everyone from former Olympic gymnast Cathy Rigby, who opens May 1 with her husband, Tom McCoy, in "They're Playing Our Song," to former Playboat Playmate of the Year Barbi Benton, opening Aug. 1 in "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas," to "Gilligan's Island" star Bob Denver, opening in "The Mikado" in September.

Bucks County Playhouse producer Ralph Miller is pleased to bring the stars back for the second season in a row. "We've wanted to expand our operation for a number of years. With these personalities and the kinds of musicals we're doing, it's a most exciting season," says Miller.

Miller's acquisition of the Fairmount Playhouse, Cape Cod, Mass., and Pocono Playhouse, has enabled him to develop his concept. At Pocono, he's experimenting with an original show, "The William," under consideration as a national production, depending on

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Paul Willstein
ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

A . G U I D E . T O
S U M M E R . T H E A T E R

Following is a guide to the upcoming theater season in the Lehigh Valley region.

ALLENTOWN ARTS CENTER

"The Belle of Amherst," June 16 (one night), "God," June 29, July 22.

Information, 820-5200

ALLENTOWN COLLEGE

"Under the Gaslight," "Gaslight Galettes," April 26-May 6, "The Passion of Dracula," May 30-June 16, "Sacramento 50 Miles," June 5-July 7 (children's musical), "The Hollow," June 27-July 8.

BUCKS COUNTY PLAYHOUSE

"Jesus Christ Superstar," tonight through Sunday, "They're Playing Our Song," Cathy Rigby, July 1-27, "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat," Jimmie Osmond, May 29-June 10, "Clear Day You Can See Forever," Diana Canova, June 13-24.

"How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying," Ron Patisio, June 27-July 8, "Guys and Dolls," Joey Travolta, Donna Pescow, July 11-29, "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas," Barbi Benton, Edd "Kookie" Byrnes, Aug. 1-19.

"Fiddler on the Roof," Avery Schreiber, Aug. 22-Sept. 9, "Shenan-

doah," Orson Bean, Sept. 12-23.

CIVIC LITTLE THEATRE

"West Side Story," May 11-19.

Information, 432-8943

GENETTI DINNER PLAYHOUSE

"Pajama Tops," April 25-May 19

"The Pirates Of Penzance," June 6-30, "Forty Carats," July 18-Aug. 11,

"The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas," Aug. 15-Sept. 8.

Information, 717-455-3691, or 717-454-2484

MORAVIAN COLLEGE

"Nobody's Earnest," musical adaptation of Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest," May 4-6, 10-13.

For information on "Nobody's Earnest," 961-1489, 961-1490, and on the summer show, 961-1368.

MT. GRETTNA PLAYHOUSE

"Major Barbara," opens July 10,

"The Glass Menagerie," opens July 24, "The Glass Menagerie," opens Aug. 7.

Information, 717-272-0433.

MUHLENBERG COLLEGE

"The Pirates of Penzance," June 22-July 15, "Oliver," July 27-Aug. 19.

Information, 433-2163.

PEDDLER'S VILLAGE

DINNER THEATRE

"Same Time, Next Year," May 24-June 10, 21-24, "The Fantasticks," June 28-July 22, "Side by Side by Sundheim," July 26-Aug. 19.

Information, 794-7438

PENNSYLVANIA STAGE CO.

"I Do, I Do," May 2-June 3

"Brew," a touring production from Canada, June 6-17.

Information, 433-3394

PENNSYLVANIA PLAYHOUSE

"Mess Appeal," May 11-26,

"Working," June 29-July 15, "Marceline Gumdrops," (children's play), Aug. 16-26.

Information, 865-6665, or 258-6829

PLAYHOUSE BY THE RIVER

"Sleuth," June 1-16, "A Midsummer Night's Dream," June 22-July 2,

"The Gin Game," July 13-July 28,

"Burning Wind," Aug. 3-18, "Win, Lose, Draw," Aug. 24-Sept. 8, "Of Mice and Men," Sept. 14-29.

Information, 717-897-6744, or 215-588-8252.

POCONO PLAYHOUSE

"They're Playing Our Song," Cathy Rigby, May 29-June 3, "The William," June Lockhart, June 5-10.

"Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat," Jimmie Osmond, June 12-24,

"Guys and Dolls,"

Joey Travolta,

Donna Pescow, July 26-July 8.

"On a Clear Day You Can See Forever," Diana Canova, July 10-22, "Kismet,"

Julius LaRosa, July 24-Aug. 5, "Fiddler on the Roof," Avery Schreiber, Aug. 7-19, "Best Little Whorehouse in Texas," Barbi Benton, Edd "Kookie" Byrnes, Aug. 21-Sept. 2.

"Man of La Mancha," Bob Bolsovser, Sept. 4-16, "The Pirates of Penzance," Sept. 18-30.

Information, 717-595-7456 (after May 1. Prior to that date, send mail to Pocono House, Mountaintop, Pa. 18342).

SHAWNEE PLAYHOUSE

"They're Playing Our Song," April 24-May 27, "Joseph and the Amaz-

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Joe Strummer tells why The Clash is carrying on

By LEN RIGHI
Of The Morning Call

"He got hit with The Big E." That's how Joe Strummer, the gruff-voiced singer and songwriter for The Clash, described the sudden firing last fall of his longtime songwriting partner, guitarist and founding member Mick Jones.

"The 'E' is short for elbow," Strummer explained in an interview Monday from his hotel room in New York City. "Imagine a line of people and an elbow moving rapidly from the left or right. Mick was at the end of the line."

As soon as the decision by Strummer and bassist Paul Simonon to oust Jones was reported in the press, there was

speculation that The Clash, a progenitor of Britain's punk-rock movement, also was at the end of the line. That was an especially discouraging prospect considering The Clash had finally begun to conquer America after years of limited commercial success in the United States.

But Strummer and Simonon wasted no time in finding two guitarists — Vince White and Nick Sheppard — to replace Jones. The reconstituted Clash, which also includes drummer Pete Howard, will perform at the Spectrum, Philadelphia, at 8 p.m. tomorrow.

"We wanted to try all comers," Strummer said of the selection process which uncovered White and Sheppard. "We didn't want the 'old pals act' — you know, we didn't just want to fill the job with someone who we'd worked with be-

fore. We didn't want to do what The Who did when they brought in Kenny Jones" to replace Keith Moon. "Who's late drummer. "We wanted to be threatened by a stranger."

Strummer and Simonon held "blind auditions. We put three songs on a tape and said, 'Here's the songs, now play the guitar.' We auditioned somewhere near 350 guitarists, and found Nick in the first batch and Vince in the second."

In the meantime, Jones has filed a lawsuit in England against his former bandmates, effectively freezing all the band's assets. "He wants all the dough and the Clash name," Strummer said. "I don't know how serious he is or exactly why he's doing it."

It has been suggested that Strummer and Simonon would have been better off putting an end to The Clash and reorganize under another name. When asked whether they would be willing to give up The Clash name to Jones if offered by a court, Strummer replied, "We're well ready to do that. We figure, 'So what?' I wanted to give Mick his share of the money and a bit more, and good

luck. I don't think he wants the name; he wants to be paid off. He's not doing anything in music, as far as I know."

Strummer said the rift between him and Jones was "not about the direction of the music. It was philosophical things, how do we intend to act in the studio. In order to produce a record, it takes more than just walking into a studio and producing a record. You must assess its emotional impact and take it from a wide point of view."

Strummer said trouble started brewing around 1980, after the release of "London Calling," arguably one of The Clash's two best albums (the band has recorded five), and worsened during the recording of "Sandinista," a sprawling, but sloppy, three-record album which continued the exploration of diverse musical styles — reggae, Motown, R&B, gospel, jazz, rap — begun with much more discipline on "London Calling."

Strummer admitted that "Sandinista" was a bit slack.

"Some of it was just not good enough. Looking at the standards of the rest of

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Chicken Legs Review has a lot to stand on

By TIM BLANGGER
Of The Morning Call

Guess again if you think Chicken Legs Review is a bunch of savior flu survivors. Try something like an all-star band offering generous dollops of blues, rhythm & blues, rock 'n' roll and "second line music," which is done in the spirit of "New Orleans funeral marches.

Making sure Chicken Legs has something to stand on is co-founder Chris "Catfish" Hodge, who explained the collaboration during a telephone interview this week from Los Angeles.

"It's basically 90 minutes of good, fun-time music," Hodge explained as his band practiced in the background for Wednesday's appearance at the Bradywine Club near Philadelphia.

"This is the third year we've been on the road and it's basically the same every year. The goal is mainly to have fun and it's always been that way. We've turned down record deals, but we've solidified our fans."

Touring with the review this year, in addition to Catfish's brother Dallas and the members of the Hodge Brothers band, will be folk-blues singer Bonnie Raitt, Paul Barrere, formerly of



Bonnie Raitt in Philadelphia Wednesday

Little Feat, one of the most influential rock bands of the early 1970s, and guitarist Cornell Dupree, a noted session musician who has played with pop-jazz studio group Stuff and appeared as a guitarist in the Paul Simon movie "One Trick Pony."

The latest installment of the review, Catfish says, plans several tributes.

Barrere plans to perform several songs in tribute to the late Lowell George, who was a founding member of Feat. He also plans to perform his new single, "If the Phone Don't Ring. You'll Know It's Me," which comes highly recommended by Catfish.

Raitt, who will perform only twice with the review — once at the Bradywine and once in Washington, D.C. — plans a tribute to the late Marvin Gaye, Catfish says.

Started in 1978 as a touring unit with the Hodge Brothers band as a nucleus, the review first invited members of The Nighthawks, a popular East Coast band, to join them.

The next year, members of Little Feat joined the Hodge Brothers, and the review sold out in 20 cities, Catfish says.

Then the Hodge Brothers Band moved to Los Angeles. They lost touch with some of their East Coast friends, but made some new ones on the West Coast and began performing with members of Bob Seger's Silver Bullet Band and with studio musicians like drummer Steve Gadd.

The Chicken Legs Review will perform at 7:30 and 1:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Bradywine Club, Routes 1 and 302. Tickets are available through Ticketron.

CLASH

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our records, we weren't putting enough effort into it. You have to censor yourself, edit yourself, and we weren't doing it. Experiment, yes, but you don't have to put it out [release it]."

"Combat Rock," The Clash's 1982 million-selling LP, featured the hits "Should I Stay or Should I Go?" and "Rock the Casbah." Both were rock club and MTV staples and they made the band stars in America. Still, Strummer called it "a salvage operation."

"We were headed for 'Sandinista'-type territory. We had too much tape and had to bring in [veteran producer] Glyn Johns. From the chaos, he brought out the rock mix. He did a great job. He took out the home movies. Of course, Mick would disagree. He said, 'You ruined my music.'"

The Clash has been faced with personnel changes almost from its inception in early 1976, when Simon and Jones decided to form a band in West London with Strummer, guitarist Keith Levine, who later worked with ex-Sex Pistols leader Johnny Rotten in Public Image, Ltd., was an early member, but left after two shows.

Terry Chimes (a.k.a. Tory Crimes), who played on The Clash's classic self-titled debut, quit after a year with the band, disgusted with drinking bottles and abuse from traditional rock audiences. ("I think it was fame that caused him to leave. Fame wasn't what he thought it would be. He thought we were crazy," Strummer said.)

Next in the drummer's chair was Nicky "Topper" Headon, who lasted from 1977 until early 1982, when he

was dismissed because, as the press release said, of a "difference of political direction." However, Strummer and Headon were close by fame. "Fame led him to drugs. We tried to cure him, but he wasn't interested in a cure."

Re-enter Terry Chimes, but only on a temporary basis. "He was working in a computer firm all those years. But we had been playing and developing during those years, and he just didn't develop along with us." So in May 1983, new drummer Peter Howard arrived. "We found him through an advert in the music press."

Strummer, 30, comes from a middle-class background. He was born of British parents in Ankara, Turkey. His father worked in the Foreign Office, which meant Strummer got to move every two years and live in places like Egypt, Mexico and West Germany.

Strummer went to school in England. "I received a good education, but the way knowledge was presented was boring and intimidating. I was drawn to music because it was the only thing that was ours [young people]. Adults would hear rhythm and blues records on the radio and say, 'That's disgusting.' They didn't understand it. It was ours."

Strummer said he and his classmates became fans of "all the beat groups" like the Rolling Stones and the Yardbirds, and then American bluesmen like Big Bill Broonzy, Lightnin' Hopkins, Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker and Howlin' Wolf. "To discover that music was great."

Strummer later attended art school, but dropped out before completing his first year. He came to music by "bottling" (holding the hat) in subway "buskers" (street musicians). In 1973, he formed a group in South Wales called The Vultures,

and in 1974 he moved to London and put together the 101ers, which played blues and early American rock.

The Clash has received extensive coverage in alternative and mainstream music and news magazines, newspapers and scandal sheets. Writers have called the group the "World's Greatest Rock Band" and "The Only Band That Matters."

But when all the hype and hoopla is peeled away, there is a good reason why The Clash is considered most important band to emerge in the late '70s, and that is its music. The Clash's idea of rock 'n' roll is a challenging and ever-changing one, as it freely mixes various musical influences with an intense socio-political consciousness and anti-authoritarian stance. It is the expansiveness and willingness to grow and evolve, despite the pressure to stay with a formula or water down its approach, that links The Clash to the best bands in rock's brief history.

"You can be the biggest band in the world and still deal with what even the newspapers won't touch," said Strummer.

Strummer says The Clash has limitations, "but we can be creative within those limitations." His label for the band's newest material, which includes the titles "Sex Mad War," "Three Card Trick," "The Instigator," "Are You Ready for War?" and "Glue Zombie Beat," is "rebel punk."

"What we're trying to do is simplify the music. I like to believe guitars and drums still hold endless possibilities. To me, a guitar is muscle and bone on a piece of wood."

Strummer said he dislikes bands who try to "cloak their music in mystique," and that he resents musicians who pretend that only a handful of people have the talent to be in a band.

THEATER

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the summer theater response. The play was written by Jonathan Daly, who wrote "Boney Kern," presented last season at Bucks.

No summer season is planned at Guthrie Playhouse, according to owner Larry Goldberg, who said that the theater has not been sold at this point. He has been talking with interested parties, some of whom have been associated with the playhouse. It's doubtful that at this late date, a summer season could be announced.

Shepherd Hills Dinner Theatre producer Richard Akins will also be producing at Peddler's Village Dinner Theatre, Lahaska, Bucks County. The theater is located above the Cock 'n' Bull Restaurant.

You'll be happy to know that cushions have been added to the hard wooden seats in historic Shawnee Playhouse. Steve Gallagher is back as director and will again cast New York talent. A fifth anniversary celebration by executive producer Charles W. Kirkwood is set for June 22.

Summer theater will be back at area colleges.

Children's performances have been nearly doubled by Act One at Allentown College of St. Francis de Sales, and the run for "The Passion of Dracula" is longer than usual, according to box office manager Susan Silsbee. The college has presented an Agatha Christie play for the last several summers, and this one will be no exception when "The Hollow" is staged. This is the third season being presented at the college's LaBuda Center and the 14th for the summer program.

At Moravian College, associate professor of theater Jack Ramsey says that the 11th annual summer dinner theater production will be announced. It will run July 5-8 and 11-15. All performances are sold out, with the exception of July 15.

"Prates of Penzance," probably the favorite Gilbert and Sullivan operetta, opens the Muhlenberg Summer Music Theatre Festival. Drama and speech department

chairman and director of theater Charlie Richter says that several former company members will be returning, including Mary McDonald, Mark Paris and Joan Barber. Donald Speith and Artie Clifton will conduct full orchestras. Two designers from the Yale School of Drama will do the sets because resident designer Curtis Dreitsch will be taking the summer off.

Special delights for the serious theatergoer willing to travel will be waiting in Mt. Gretna where the American Shakespeare Festival, now in its third season, is presented. The theme for the July 10-Aug. 18 season is "A Summer Celebration of Love: Shavian and Otherwise."

The Playhouse by the River, Mount Bethel, is back with a season that includes popular drama.

This will be the first summer season for theater at the Allentown Arts Center, according to Barbara Barkan, arts center director. "The Belle of Amherst" will feature Joana Izell of Philadelphia. Woody Allen's "God" will be the center's Theater Company production and will be directed by Tim Roche.

LIST

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ing Technicolor Dreamcoat," June 1-July 15. "Annie," July 20-Sept. 2. "Gypsy," Sept. 7-Oct. 28. "Jack and the Beanstalk," May 3, 5, 10, 12, 17 and 19. "Winnie the Pooh," June 9, 14, 16, 21, 23, 28 and 30, and "The Princess and the Pea," July 28, Aug. 4, 9, 11, 16, 18, 23 and 25 (children's theater).

Information, 717-421-1500 or 717-421-1509.

SHEPHERD HILLS DINNER THEATRE

"Some Enchanted Evening with Rogers and Hammerstein," April 27-June 3. "Annie," July 15-Aug. 12.

Information, 398-1149

VALLEY FORGE MUSIC FAIR

"Fiddler on the Roof," Herschel Bernardi, May 15-June 3. "Grease," July 10-15. "George M.," Joel Grey, Aug. 4, 9, 11, 16, 18, 23 and 25 (children's theater).

Information, 644-5000, or 296-9994.

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