

Slezak Tells Show Biz Story

By DAVE PHILPO
Staff Writer

It could well have been called "Walter Slezak Week" in Birmingham.

The actor-singer-comedian delighted hundreds of ladies at Town Hall appearances on Thursday and Friday; a movie in which he starred was aired on NBC's "Saturday Night at the Movies"; and his new book, "What Time's the Next Swan," was a sell-out in local bookstores.

It was evident to those fortunate enough to visit the actor backstage that Slezak is just as witty off-stage as on.

SLEZAK SAYS the funniest person he knows is his friend, Jean Kerr (she inspired his book).

"Jean is a basically amusing person," he said. "She just can't say anything dull."

On one occasion, Jean called Slezak, informed him that she was having 12 children at her house for lunch the next day and asked what she should order for them.

"Twelve plastic bags," he promptly replied.

Jean, an author in her own right, ("Please Don't Eat the Daisies" and "Snakes Have All the Lines") repeated funny stories that Slezak had told her about his life and Doubleday decided there "was a book in" Slezak.

FOR THE Town Hall audience, Slezak traced a Broadway play from the time it is conceived to the point where the actors wait in Slezak's for the reviews. He took some potshots at television in the meantime.

"The most offensive thing to me is the laugh track. At strategic points in the tape there are gales of laughter and there you sit at home with a deadpan face."

The biggest problem television has today, says Slezak, is finding someone to make a villain without offending minority groups.

"It can't be the French or Russians—they're our friends. And we don't have the guts to make the Russians villains."

SLEZAK THINKS he holds the

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Reviewed by
ANNETTA WONNBERGER

Opening to a sell-out house Friday night, the Birmingham Village Players rolled through a production of "Once Upon a Mattress" sparkling with good-humored satire, lively dialogue and tricky music.

A sophisticated musical written by Jay Thompson, Marshall Barer and Dean Fuller, with music by Mary Rodgers, "Once Upon a Mattress" provided obvious enjoyment for both audience and cast.

Alleging that the prodigal princess "Many Moons" tells only one version of the fairy-tale ballad who won her prince by proving her royalty through her sensitivity to the discomfort caused by a pillow placed under her twenty mattresses, minstrel George Ryder began the fun as, with tongue-in-cheek, he

Boyd's Plays Held Over for Another Week

"Study in Color," three new one-act plays concerning race relations written by the Rev. Malcolm Boyd, will be held over for additional performances at the Will-O-Way Apprentice Theatre.

Originally slated to close Nov. 17, the plays will be held over Friday and Saturday nights. Performances begin at 8:30 p.m.

Featuring Cliff Frazier, Woodie King, Jr., and Chaplain Boyd, the three plays have been selected for inclusion in the Off-Broadway section of "Best Plays of 1962-63."

Guitar, Accordion Classes in S'field

Intermediate classes in guitar and accordion are being offered by the City of Southfield Department of Parks and Recreation. Group instruction will be offered with a registration fee of \$10 for 12 sessions. Children must provide their own instruments.

record in changing clothes. In one performance he changed from sport clothes to a tuxedo in 17 seconds.

"Of course there are days when zippers get stuck. . . . Sometimes they hand me other people's pants and they never seem to fit."

Is Slezak ever nervous on opening night?

"At 5 p.m. the butterflies in my stomach are dancing the minuet. By six, they are doing the fandango."

Being in show business has had a marked effect on Slezak's children. One time in church, a bishop, dressed in ceremonial robes, walked down the aisle. Slezak's son nudged him and said:

"Let's go backstage and get his autograph."

THE ACTOR'S book, "What Time's the Next Swan," is a highly readable, heartwarming story of Slezak's early life as the son of the famous opera star, Leo Slezak, in Austria.

Slezak explains the title of his book: "It was just before Papa's first entrance at a Lohengrin performance. He was ready to step into the boat, which, drawn by a swan, was to take him onstage."

"Somehow the stagehand on the other side got his signals mixed, started pulling, and the swan left without Papa. He quietly turned around and said: 'What time's the next swan?'"

SLEZAK'S RISE as an actor was not an easy one and he suffered several setbacks. This has been his guiding philosophy: "Every time I set my cap for a certain goal and work hard to get it, it's in vain. But suddenly I will stumble and fall on my face!"

"And when I rise, I see a shining piece of completely unexpected good luck there, begging to be picked up."



ECCENTRIC PHOTO

WALTER SLEZAK delighted hundreds of fans at Birmingham Town Hall Thursday and Friday with a collection of witty and sometimes spicy anecdotes about his life in show business. Above, he chats with Dr. J. B. Hassberger, who introduced him at the initial performance. During the lecture, Slezak got in a plug for his new book, "What Time's the Next Swan?"

Grinnell Award Winners Appear at Cranbrook House

Reviewed by
ISABEL HIMELHOCH

In the intimate atmosphere of Cranbrook House, the Cranbrook Music Guild presented the 1962 Grinnell Scholarship Award winners.

This is an annual event that the Music Guild offers in its program series. Often times, these young music students go on to great heights in their respective musical fields. The Cranbrook Music Guild gives the membership a "ground-floor" introduction to this young and vital talent.

On the evening of Nov. 13, the group was treated to a very stimulating evening with two young award winners. Each performer maintained individuality in his own right.

JAMES TOCCO, pianist, already a well-known name throughout the



ECCENTRIC PHOTO

Stamped with Season's Greetings

Getting a head start on sending her Christmas cards, Mary Haack purchases a sheet of special holiday stamps from Postmaster Roland W. Reese at the Birmingham Post Office. Said Reese: "The stamp was conceived of by the Post Office Dept. to supply a

need for a decorative Christmas stamp." The design depicts traditional holiday symbols, most notably a wreath. "This is the first time that a special stamp has been offered postal patrons designed specifically for the Christmas season," he said.

Local Best Sellers

- Fiction: NO RED RIBBONS—John Quirk; THIN RED LINE—James Jones; SHADE OF DIFFERENCE—Allen Drury; FAIL-SAFE—Eugene Burdick and Harvey Wheeler.
- Nonfiction: WHAT TIME'S THE NEXT SWAN—Walter Slezak; SILENT SPRING—Rachel Carson; TRAVELS WITH CHARLEY—John Steinbeck.

THE BIRMINGHAM ECCENTRIC, BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN
November 21, 1962 SECTION D

Coloring Contest On Today

Looking for Santa? Tried the chimney? Well, if you're in kindergarten, sixth grade or anywhere in between, take your crayons in hand, find the entry blank for The Eccentric Christmas Coloring Contest and set to work!

First prize is a new Schwinn bicycle; second prize, a watch; third prize, a \$25 savings bond—and EVERYONE who enters receives a box of crayons.

Entries must be sent (or delivered) by Dec. 12 to: Christmas Coloring Contest, The Birmingham Eccentric, 1225 Bowers, Birmingham. You may submit as many as you want, but an entry blank filed in completely and clearly must be attached to each.

PRIZES WILL be awarded on the basis of neatness, originality of thought and beauty. Judges will take into consideration the age of the entrant in making their selections.

Winners will be announced in the Dec. 20 issue of The Eccentric.

Cranbrook Students Have Christmas Sale With Exhibition

Copper and sterling jewelry, beautifully glazed ceramics and handsome hand-woven scarves are just some of the objects available in the student Christmas sale and exhibition at Cranbrook Academy of Art opening Dec. 1.

The sale and exhibition, which will also include paintings, sculpture, prints and plate mats, will continue in the Academy of Art Galleries through Dec. 9 from 2 to 5 p.m. each day except Monday, Dec. 3.

Detroit area, executed his selections with dexterity, tempered by understanding.

The Mozart Sonata in A minor, K310, was handled with the crisp, direct and uncluttered true classical form.

Chopin's Ballade in G minor, Opus 23, illustrated his pianistic ability for the flourishing cadenzas and also the romantic passages filled with emotionalism and delicacy.

RAVELS "ONDINE" was a delight to one and all as Tocco wisked his fingers up and down the keyboard as if he were stroking a harp. (Have's degree of difficulty is in his subtle approach for the piano virtuoso.)

As his final selection on the program, Tocco spritned along through the modernistic Toccata in D minor by Tscherepin. This very fully, showed Tocco's atonal ear, and his extreme adaptability to contemporary music.

The audience response to Tocco's (See WINNERS, 2-D)

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Cultural Events

Nov. 21
SOUTH OAKLAND COMMUNITY CONCERTS — The South Oakland Community Concerts Association will hear a piano concert by Richard Cass at Oak Park High School. Admittance by membership subscription only.

BIRMINGHAM ART CENTER—Birmingham Society of Women Painters 18th annual exhibition at the Art Center, 1516 S. Cranbrook Road, Birmingham. The show will continue through Nov. 25. Hours are 2 to 5 p.m. daily.

LITTLE GALLERY—Exhibition of prints which is the fifth in a series entitled "The Artist as a Printmaker" at the Little Gallery, 916 E. Maple, Birmingham. Will last until Dec. 8. Hours are 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. except Sundays and Mondays.

BIRMINGHAM THEATER — "West Side Story" Academy Award winning film starring Rita Moreno, Richard Beymer and Natalie Wood with music by Leonard Bernstein.

BLOOMFIELD THEATER—Meredith Wilson's "Music Man" starring Robert Preston and Shirley Jones.

Nov. 22
LATHRUP PLAYERS—The Lathrup Players will present "Little Nell, the Orphan Girl" at the Community Congregational Church, 11 1/2 Mile and Southfield, beginning at 8:30 p.m.

Nov. 23
CHILDREN'S THEATER—The AAUW sponsors as the second play in their series, "The Invisible Indian Chief," to be given by the Millan Children's Theater at the Birmingham Theater today only at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.

VILLAGE PLAYERS—"Once Upon a Mattress" presented by the Village Players at their playhouse, 1752 Chestnut Street, Birmingham beginning at 8 p.m.

NOTE DAME GLEE CLUB—The University of Notre Dame Glee Club will perform in the Marian High School Auditorium at 8:30 p.m.

WILL-O-WAY—"Study in Color," original plays by the Rev. Malcolm Boyd at the Will-O-Way Theater, Long Lake Road (near Telegraph), Bloomfield Hills, at 8:30 p.m.

LATHRUP VILLAGE PLAYERS—The Lathrup Village Players will present "Little Nell, the Orphan Girl" at the Community (See CULTURAL EVENTS, 4-D)