

Weekender Entertainment



Blue grass and folk in Uxbridge

Hobby Horse Arms

Enjoy your favorite blue grass and folk music with Conrad Kipping who will entertain audiences this weekend at the Hobby Horse Arms, in Uxbridge.

Herongate Barn

Herongate Barn presents the original play "Cheaters" which made its debut last night and will run until Oct. 24.

Dinner theatre performances on Thursday, Friday and Sunday nights are \$21, which includes dinner, theatre and sales tax and \$23 on Saturday evening.

For further information and reservations call Dawn or Cheryl at 294-0426.

Sheraton Parkway

The Parkway's entertainment line-up in Captain Peppertree's Monday through

What's On

Nancy Hoskin 294-2200



Saturday features Markham resident Diana Nahr. The Sheraton Parkway is at Hwy 7 and Leslie St.

Nag's Head North

Enjoy a Credence Clearwater Revival "revival" with Green River, taking the stage tonight at Nag's Head North, located on Woodbine Ave.

Greens of Markham

Back by popular demand, tonight and Sunday evening, at The Greens in Markham is the famed R & B recording

artist, George Oliver. Just nominated last week for two Juno Awards, Mr. Olliver will take the stage at 9 p.m. Cover charge is \$3. The Greens is located in the new 16th Avenue Plaza.

Deer Park Inn

Deer Park's Theatre in the Park, on Hwy 47 in Stouffville, presents Boeing Boeing, until Sept. 26, a comedy about three stewardesses and their one playboy fiance.

For further info and reservations call 640-6060.

Humberto's Hideaway

Twice Around the Park can be seen Friday and Saturday evening. Dinner is served at 7 p.m., and the show starts at 9 p.m. For further information and reservations call 294-6523.

Cheer's

Join friends at Deer Park's new pub, "Cheers", open Tuesday through Friday from 4 p.m.

Markham Theatre

This weekend the world renowned Famous People Players will be at the Markham Theatre for the Performing Arts. Tickets are still available for this evenings performance, as well as on Sunday night. Prices are \$17.50 for adults and \$12.50 for seniors and children under 12. For further info call 479-0201.

Lindner's

Enjoy your favorite tunes from the '40s to today's rock 'n' roll with vocalist Anne Sequin. Ms. Sequin performs in Whiston's Upstairs Lounge, Markham Village Lanes, from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m., Tuesday through Friday.

Brodie's

Dave Sommers entertains audiences this weekend at Brodie's, located in Unionville.

Cullen Barns

Running until Oct. 3, at Cullen Country Barns Dinner Theatre, is Noel Coward's comedy of the '40s, Private Lives.

For reservations and information about performances at Cullen Barns call 477-4475.

A sampling of local dinner theatres

Dinner theatre has taken quite a beating from the critics in its relatively short life. A wag once dubbed it "dimmer theatre." Well, perhaps—in the sense that it's often not the kind of theatre you'd expect to find at Centrestage or the Royal Alex. (Nor is the dinner what you'd expect from Winston's.)

But people don't go to dinner theatre for chateaubriand and Chekhov. Undemanding and eager-to-be-pleased, typical audiences simply go for a good time. For a rib-sticking meal and rib-tickling entertainment, both served up for the normal cost of either one or the other.

This hybrid phenomenon, the salvation of many a "resting" actor, had its roots in the States about 15 years ago and quickly spread to Canada and around the globe. The peak of its popularity appears to have passed and, with the closing a couple of years ago of one of Toronto's oldest, Theatre in the Dell, and, most recently, the Variety, some observers of the theatre scene predict its eventual demise.

But the amazing success of the new and huge Stage West, currently doing sellout business out in Mississauga, would seem to refute this view. Not to mention four thriving concerns right here in the Markham area. Each has its own distinctive flavor and a loyal following.

Herongate Barn

Herongate Barn, out on the Altona Road, is the doyen of the quartet. Indeed, it's one of the oldest in Ontario. Owners Al and Dawn Ward have been packing them in at their converted old barn for 12 years.

The place smacks of informality, rustic charm and an infectious sense of fun. The buffet is unpretentious but generous and features a well-stocked and varied salad bar. Surrounded by barn board and beams, sitting in stalls labelled "Elsie" or "Bossy", patrons are served a second dessert in the form of a warmup

act by their amiable host, Al Ward. Playing the guitar, telling good-natured jokes, singing familiar songs, he defies even the most determined of curmudgeons not to laugh, join in the singalong and split their sides at his inevitable finale, Mary Had a Little Lamb.

Like Burt Reynolds in his famous Florida establishment, the Wards feed them in one room and play to 'em in another. The upstairs theatre is cosy and rustic, too, with excellent sight lines, except for a few unraked rows at the front.

It provides a steady diet of "silly sex comedies"—those crowd pleasers full of that winking innuendo which boils down to good clean fun. If at times the Wards are a little indiscriminating in their choice of play (there are also simply silly sex comedies), well, some 72 plays in 12 years are bound to strain their resources. In spite of occasional miscasting and/or self-indulgent actors, their shows are well-rehearsed, fast-paced and presented with great good humor.

Humberto's Hideaway

Humberto's Hideaway (formerly Fernando's) added theatre to dinner at its Markham Main Street restaurant 7 or 8 years ago. It's the smallest of the four and has the flavor of an intimate night club. Unlike the other three, which cater to large groups by the busload, parties of from two to eight predominate here.

In the past, service has been correspondingly unobtrusive and professional, if very slow on one recent occasion. Founder Fernando Marto was justly proud of the choice and quality of his menu

and the standards he set appear to have been maintained through an interim ownership. The third and latest proprietor, Humberto Cabral, has closed Dirty Dick's, a downstairs rock emporium. Customers no longer will be pummeled by vibrations coming through the floor.

With its pocket-handkerchief of a stage, Humberto's specializes in lively, small-cast revues or two-handers, plays like Same Time, Next Year and the just opened Twice Around the Park. Its two most recent productions were a touch under-rehearsed at opening, but then went on to enjoy long runs and enthusiastic receptions. Both featured energetic and committed performers. It will be interesting to see what the new owner makes of it. The mixture as before? Or something new and different added?

Deer Park Inn

Stouffville's Theatre in the Park at Deer Park Inn opened three years ago and is easily the most consistently professional. The brainchild of former owner Eric Farrell (Deer Park, too, is under new management), it was designed especially for dinner theatre. With tables on three tiers, sight lines are excellent.

Its somewhat formal blue and white decor is endearingly softened by the motherly air and grammatical lapses of its waitresses. They offer a menu similar to Humberto's: soup or sometimes salad; a choice of 4 entrees (roast beef here, steak there, veal, chicken and perhaps a pasta dish); a tasty dessert and coffee. Farrell, who also prided himself on the quality of his meals, would

no doubt have been horrified, however, by a salad of tired, old, brown lettuce served us at a recent matinee.

But onstage all is as polished as ever. With shows like Last of the Red Hot Lovers and Boeing-Boeing, a repertory company seems to be a building here, under Terri Hallam's expert direction. The star of the sparkling company is Paul Saunders, a joy of a comedian, whom they should hang on to at all costs.

Cullen Barns

Cullen Barns is the latest in the field. Opened about a year and a half ago, it is perhaps the most theatrically ambitious of the four. Certainly, with plays like The Fourposter and Private Lives under its belt and The Dining Room due to open in October, it is the classiest in its choice of play.

But the room itself is a disappointment. Long and plain and rather sterile, with the stage at one end, elevated above eye level, it's the more surprising to come upon after enjoying the warmly intimate and creative use of space

in the rest of the cavernous barns. Long tables, running perpendicular to the stage, are fine for bus tours but place small parties cheek by jowl with total strangers. Still, the imaginative and varied buffet, with its scrumptious dessert table, helps make one forget one's surroundings.

The quality of its theatre cannot be savored from just one performance seen by the writer. But Private Lives was marked by some excellent acting, uneven direction and poor visuals. One wonders if the presence of Connie's Antiques on the premises could prove a mixed blessing. As a ready source of set dressings for The Fourposter and The Dining Room, it probably couldn't be bettered. But its use for Private Lives was unfortunate, to say the least. If Cullen Dinner Theatre hasn't yet found quite the perfect blend, most of the right ingredients are there.

Dinner theatre: Some people gorge on it, some never touch the stuff. Others like to sample its pleasures now and again. Whichever, in Markham it looks like it's here to stay.

Visit Heritage Festival today

Learn more about Markham's vibrant past at the Heritage Festival today.

The Markham Museum hosts this annual event which sees the clock turn back to a century ago when pioneers established the town as thriving farming community.

The fun begins at 11 a.m. and continues til 4 p.m. Visitors can expect demonstrations of pioneer crafts and skills. Watch apples being turned into cider and butter, the work of steam engines, horse shoeing and see the collection of 19th century

land vehicles in the Ward building.

Also on hand will be homebaking for sale. Visit the newly restored railway station where you can imagine the people who arrived and left from the old Locust Hill station.

The museum is located on Hwy 48 north of 16th Ave. Enter the grounds from 16th Ave. west of Hwy 48. Admission is \$2 for adults, and 50 cents for youths. Children under 12 years will be admitted free of charge. There is no charge for parking.