

### 36 plays planned for TV

By Irv Letofsky  
Staff Writer

In the newest attempt to get American plays on American public TV, five leading national agencies are putting up as much as \$10 million for 36 new productions over three seasons beginning in October 1975.

Los Angeles public station KCET-TV reportedly has been given the prime contract, with the stipulation that half the productions be made at other stations around the country, like KTCA in the Twin Cities.

One promising prospect of the undertaking is that the organizations — National Endowment for the Arts, Ford Foundation, Theatre Communications Group, Corporation for Public Broadcasting and Public Broadcasting Service — strictly want scripts written for the television medium. Despite good intentions, the latest "Theater in America" series is coming off as mostly ineffectual staged plays.

Despite the standing of the Guthrie Theater, it is not quite clear if it will be involved in the new project. "Theater in America" producer Jac Venza was offered any of three Guthrie productions last summer but didn't select any.

Although Guthrie artistic director Michael Langham has agreed to serve on an advisory committee set up by the Los Angeles station, KTCA didn't make an application for the project when proposals were called for in January.

An official of the National Endowment said 14 stations made bids, including some smaller stations in Austin, Texas, and Provo, Utah.

In the KTCA response to the call for bids to run the project, George Arms, the station's director of creative projects, wrote that the proposal was confusing and that Denny Spence, who joined KTCA about a year ago as a producer-director to develop new programming, "will have nothing to do with the proposal as it is now displayed." Arms said KTCA would be interested in participating in the project and offered Spence as "eminently well qualified" to serve as executive producer of the series.

Arms said later that since the original proposal called for bids within three weeks, he assumed that the agencies "weren't interested in making an open call." He said he was tired of "the imputation that we can't do quality work," a reference to a long-standing KTCA complaint that a few of the larger stations are favored with program grants.

"I was not slavish in the letter I wrote back," Arms said. "I said, look, the Guthrie's here and what's wrong with the Guthrie? We can do these things: if you want to talk about it, fine. We'll respond to any kind of proposal that has guidelines. We did our best."

In his letter Arms made reference to several Twin Cities organizations — the Guthrie, Minnesota Opera Company, Children's Theater Company, Chimera Theater and Cricket Theater — to indicate the creative possibilities if the project were based here. But he added that KTCA would view "with less than enthusiasm" anybody coming in to exploit such talent "without our cooperation."

#### Etcetera

Among the better news of the week, Garrison Keillor, Minnesota's own prairie home companion, will return to KSJN-FM and the state public radio network on 4:30 p.m. Saturdays with live shows. Beginning June 15 the network will run tapes of three recent performances at

Walker Art Center. Then he will broadcast live from Janet Wallace Auditorium at Macalester College. It will be, he says, "a wholesome variety show" . . .

"I Do! I Do!" will keep doing it and doing it in the basement room at the Chanhassen Dinner Theater. After 110,000 fans have seen it and seen it again (a 74-percent capacity), it will have its 1,200th performance tonight—the longest running musical after "The Fantastiks" at the Sullivan Playhouse in New York City. Chanhassen already has paid \$40,000 in royalties for it. Still on the boards is Dave Anders. Dee Martin is playing his spouse while his real wife, Susan Goepfinger, is on leave while expecting their first child . . .

Los Angeles's public TV station, KCET-TV, collected \$514,000 during its recent fund-raising auction, with the help of such donations as Fred Astaire's shoes from "Finian's Rainbow," a John Wayne Stetson hat and Pat Boone's personalized Bible . . . With its 24-week commitment almost up at the Gopher Theater, "The Exorcist" has brought more than \$600,000 in ticket sales. Recent weekly grosses have run around \$6,500, considerably down from the high of \$64,000 the 4th week.

"Harold and Maude" groupies won't have to wait even another week to be reunited with their favorite flick, which closed last week at the Westgate after 115 weeks. It opens today at the Uptown . . .

The biggest bargain in town in years, if your criterion is minute-dollars, is the matinee at the Mann theater. The current double feature is "The Godfather" and "Lady Sings the Blues," with a total running time of 5½ hours. If you go before 2 p.m., it costs \$1.25—about 23 cents an hour . . .

Martha Mitchell will co-host the Mike Douglas show for the week of Aug. 5. Her salary is confidential, reports columnist Maxine Cheshire, possibly because her lawyers feel it might jeopardize the financial arrangements of her divorce from the former attorney general. Her memoirs are almost completed but she hasn't found a publisher yet.—Irv Letofsky and Bob Lundegaard.

### St. Cloud won't poison its pigeons

Associated Press

St. Cloud, Minn.

The City Council bowed to public pressure Monday night and decided to let the Department of Health deal with the controversial city pigeon problem.

The council rescinded an earlier action in which it ordered poisoning of the city's 40,000 to 50,000 pigeons.

Duane Beckstrom, city health director, said his

department has no immediate plans for eradicating the birds.

Citizens had complained that the poisoning of the pigeons would constitute a health problem in itself.

#### Senator hospitalized

Sen. Stuart Symington, D-Mo., entered Bethesda Naval Hospital Tuesday for hernia surgery. Symington was expected to remain in the hospital for five to seven days.

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