

Stars parody day TV image in Soapdish

By Julia Spencer

Poor Celeste Talbert. She may be America's sweetheart, having just won her umpteenth award for Best Actress in a daytime drama, but her boyfriend has just dumped her, and desperately ambitious co-star Montana Moorehead (Cathy Moriarty) is plotting with a producer (Robert Downey, Jr.) to have her written off the show. Not only that, but as part of the scheme, old flame and former co-star Jeffrey Anderson (Kevin Kline), who Celeste had written out of the story 20 years ago, is brought back from obscurity (and decapitation) to play opposite her again. As if that isn't enough, her niece, Lori Craven (Elisabeth Shue) arrives on the set as an extra, and is getting much too close to Jeffrey for her taste. And that's only half the story behind the scenes on the set of fictional soap opera *The Sun Also Sets*, where "art" imitates life imitates "art".

On the surface, *Soapdish* is a witty, in-joke-filled parody of silly soap plots, which builds to a hilarious climax bound to amuse soap fans and soap scoffers alike. But underneath the glossy production values and brisk direction are some seriously clever jabs not only at the soaps, but also at the actors, writers, and producers who must keep the show going and the ratings up at all costs. "Infotainment" journalists (Entertainment Tonight's John Tesh and Leeza Gibbons play themselves in cameos) and fans who feed the publicity machine also come in for some light-hearted lampooning as well.

Sally Field is a comedy juggernaut as the beleaguered Celeste, who goes to malls with friend and head writer Rose Schwartz (Whoopi Goldberg) for a "fix" of fan adulation and autograph signing when she's feeling depressed. Oscar winner Kevin Kline (*A Fish Called Wanda*) is in equally fine form here as an

egocentric actor who has been playing Willy Loman in *Death of A Salesman* for an unappreciative retiree in a Florida dinner theater, but dreams of doing a one-man Hamlet on Broadway. Kline's character is so completely given over to perfecting his craft that he is unable to communicate with other people in real-life situations without a script and at least one rehearsal.

Elisabeth Shue is alternately innocent and crafty as the ingenu wannabe Lori, who is reminiscent of Anne Baxter's ambitious character in *All About Eve*. Cathy Moriarty (Oscar nominee for *Raging Bull*) is fantastic as the jealous, backstabbing, manipulative baby Dunaway who will do anything to be the star. Teri Hatcher also shows promise as the laughably miscast Dr. Monica Demonaco. Real-life soap stars from General Hospital (Anna) and *As the World Turns* (Caleb) also appear in cameos.

Unfortunately, Whoopi Goldberg and Carrie Fisher (as a hunk-happy casting director) are given much too little to do, and Robert Downey, Jr.'s role as the sycophant producer is somewhat underwritten.

All in all, though, the script, written by Robert Harling (Steel Magnolias) and Andrew Bergman (*The Freshman*) is extremely funny, and the characters, while certainly not Shakespearean in depth, are cleverly drawn, with a lot more nuance and witty observation of human nature than your standard formula comedy.

In the uproarious finale, *Soapdish* proves that the bottom line in the world of soaps is the bottom line. That is to say: anything goes, in or out of character, in or out of the script, as long as it's sufficiently dramatic and shocking to help the ratings. Maybe not a completely original concept (remember *Tootsie*?) but highly entertaining nonetheless. *Soapdish* is rated PG-13 and is now playing at the Manor East III.

Texas Music Festival

Classical chamber series returns to A&M for fourth consecutive summer

By Yvonne Salce

Add a little romance, a little style to your summer nights in June.

For the fourth year, sounds of chamber music will flow from Rudder Theatre in what promises to be an oasis for an otherwise hot and dry summer.

The Humana Hospital - Brazos Valley Texas Music Festival Chamber Music premiered its summer season Monday night with a performance of classical selections by French harpsichordist Brigitte Haudebourg. Bringing invited guest artists and internationally renowned ensembles to the A&M campus, the concerts will continue every Monday evening in June at 7:30 p.m. and run through July 1.

"It's a wonderful summertime thing," says Werner Rose, coordinator of Texas A&M University's music program and this summer's concert series.

The festival has certainly been a pleasant surprise in the slow days of summer for many music enthusiasts. Last year's attendance nearly doubled to 400 and audience responses ranged from "tremendous" to "cool." As one enthusiast put it, "After a hard days work, impossible hot weather, a Monday besides, anything that can get me to come back to campus has to be good! What a wonderful way to end the day! Music in concert is real in a way that no recording can ever be."

For those who are novices to classical music and its many forms of artistic expression, Rose recommends chamber music as an excellent way to get into it.

"Because you have one person playing a part," says Rose, "you have an interaction of communication and a sharing of emotional and interpreted thoughts."

The end result is something that



SONDRA ROBBINS/The Battalion

French harpsichordist Brigitte Haudebourg rehearses for her performance Monday night.

allows the audience to share in the performer's charm, feel the warmth of the sound and experience an intimacy that is usually hard to come by in any other way.

Two to nine players usually make up a chamber music concert, Rose says. It is similar to that of a piano player and singer collaborating and communicating, he says.

"It has a rich repertoire that is very diverse, very large - but also a very highly respected repertoire," Rose says.

Founded in 1984 by David Tomatz, director of the University of Houston School of Music, and in conjunction with the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, the Texas Music Festival, formerly known as the Lyric Art Festival, presented chamber music concerts on Sundays and Thursdays at the mu-

seum and at the University of Houston.

Since 1988, the Texas Music festival has extended its series of chamber music concerts to College Station every summer.

The Festival, coordinated by Texas A&M's music program, gained solid footing last year from Humana Hospital, which provided a major grant to underwrite the summer music series. Humana Hospital continues to support the Texas Music Festival, making it one of the largest single corporate contributions to the arts in Brazos Valley. Financial support also comes from the Arts Council of Brazos Valley and the University Honors Program at Texas A&M.

Haudebourg, featured Monday night, is a worldwide performer and renowned musician who

studied at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique in Paris. An artist of many accolades, Haudebourg performed selections from Schobert, Bach and Mozart.

Other performances for the 1991 season are the Pro Arte String Quartet and Lawrence Wheeler, June 10; the Latvian Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra from Riga, Latvia, USSR, featuring music director and conductor Tovi Lifshitz, June 17; the Houston Symphonic Brass Quintet with Winds, June 24; and violoncellist Laslo Varga, July 1.

Series tickets are \$30 for adults and \$20 for students and senior citizens. Tickets for individual concerts are \$8 for adults and \$5 for students and senior citizens. Tickets can be purchased at the MSC Box Office and Foley's.



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