

Tony Winner Plays Civic Center

SYRACUSE—"Children of a Lesser God," Mark Medoff's warm, witty and illuminating play about the love between a deaf woman and a hearing man, is scheduled to run July 20-24 in the Civic Center's Summerfest '83 series. Produced for Summerfest by Contemporary Theatre of Syracuse, performances will be at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday and at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday in the Center's Carrier Theater.

The critical and popular hit of the 1980 Broadway season, "Children of a Lesser God" won a Tony as Best Play of 1980 as well as earning co-stars John Rubinstein and Phyllis Frelich Tonys as Best Actor and Best Actress. While the work is not biographical, Medoff was inspired to write "Children" by the interplay between Frelich, already an accomplished actress with the National Theatre of the Deaf, and her husband, Robert Steinberg, the company's stage manager and lighting designer.

"I picked their brains for months," says Medoff, "in an effort to find out more about what happens when a deaf person and a hearing one fall in love and try to build a life together." While the characters, Sarah and James, exhibit some of the traits found in Phyllis and Robert, there are significant differences. "I'm proud like Sarah, but I don't think I'm as stubborn or as angry," Frelich says, looking at her husband and laughing soundlessly. "I don't have her hostility for hearing people." Phyllis, whose parent and eight brothers and sisters are also deaf, never found being unable to hear a great handicap and feels no envy for the hearing. Robert adds, "The main difference between myself and James is that he finds the fact that he can't enter her silence frustrating. I find it fascinating. There's a wonderful sense of discovery in knowing someone who's so different."

James is bright, flippant, a natural wit who hides behind his humor to keep from being hurt himself. After three years in the Peace Corps, he has gotten a job as speech therapist in a school for the deaf; his main responsibilities are to teach lip-reading and speech. Sarah is a 26-year-old speech dropout, highly intelligent and stubbornly resistant to learning to vocalize for fear of being patronized, pitied or branded as "retarded" because of poor enunciation (her mother had treated her so). Sarah works as maid at the school in order to avoid the hearing world.

When the two first meet, Sarah refuses to communicate and pretends that she cannot understand James. He assaults her protective barriers with humor...he won't brave enough to burn his draft card, so he burned his Blue Cross card..."I don't think I'll need it in Ecuador," he adds. His wit and amiable idealism begin to work on her, and soon sparks fly between the two. As they define their pasts and their personalities, the sparks become flames. They fall in love and, after a stormy and delightfully sexy courtship, get married. Approaching sex for the first time



AN ACT OF LOVE... Frank Coppola portrays teacher James Leeds trying to communicate with a reluctant Sarah (Patty Primo) in Contemporary Theatre of Syracuse's production of "Children of a Lesser God." The show opens Wednesday and runs through Sunday. Tickets, priced at \$6.50, are available by calling the Civic Center box office at 425-2121.

Disabled Parking At the State Fair

SYRACUSE—A further refinement in policy for the disabled to acquire parking on the fairgrounds during the 1983 New York State Fair has been announced by fair director Thomas Young. Under the new system only those with the special disabled license plates or permits issued by the State of New York will be allowed to park in the designated disabled fairgrounds parking lot. The parking fee of \$2 remains the same as last year.

The 1983 plan eliminates the need to obtain a fair permit. There will be

no disabled parking permits issued from the fair this year.

"This new policy conforms to the universal system that is recognized statewide," Young said. The plates are issued through the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Any local motor vehicle office has information on obtaining the special license plates that allow for parking in special areas at shopping centers, malls and other public facilities.

This year's fair runs from Aug. 27 through Sept. 5.

(he has risked his neck and his job by climbing a tree to her dormitory room), he automatically reaches to turn off the lights. She asks that he leave them on. Puzzled, he asks why. "So we can talk," she answers simply. At a restaurant, James tries to describe the delights of veal parmesan, but gives up when he realizes that "baby cow with sauce" doesn't sound very tasty.

Starring as Sarah in the Contemporary Theatre of Syracuse production is Patty Primo, who, like Phyllis Frelich in the Broadway show, is a deaf person playing a deaf character. Frank Coppola takes on the demanding role of James, a part that is particularly difficult, says CTS director Sharee Lemos, not only because of the subtleties of the acting but also because James must verbalize nearly every line in the play as the other characters sign. Coppola, who has been signing for most of his life, has that advantage over Broadway star Rubinstein, who had to learn all the dialogue and all the signing when he got the part.

Having all the lines both signed and spoken on stage is, of course, a theatrical device. The technique, though unnatural, ensures that both hearing and non-hearing audiences can understand everything that is going on on stage. And communications between individuals and between the hearing and non-hearing communities is what this play is really all about. While the message is important in "Children," it is conveyed in a wiggly personal manner, always engaging and very often funny.

Tickets for "Children of a Lesser God" are priced at \$16.50, with discounts for groups, students and seniors, and are available at the Civic Center Box Office: (315) 425-2121. Summerfest '83 is a presentation of the Cultural Resources Council and is made possible, in part, with the aid of public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts.



COLORING CAN BE FUN--Cut out the cow, color it and bring it to "Sunday in the Park" this Sunday between 1 and 4 p.m. at the Fort Ontario park in Oswego. Prizes will be given out in every age group.



NAME _____
 Phone No. _____
 Age _____

