

ENTERTAINMENT

SECTION

D

THE CALL

www.woonsocketcall.com

Friday, February 23, 2001

Getting to know 'The King and I'

By KATHIE RALEIGH
Lifestyle Editor

WOONSOCKET — Mark Anderson says "The King and I" always has been one of his favorite shows. That's a good thing, because he's seen it almost daily for the past month and a half.

Anderson, of Coventry, is directing Theatre Works' production of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, and he's been rehearsing with his cast of 38 since January. He still speaks enthusiastically about the story — and especially about his performers.

He's been watching their work scene by scene, but last week he began sequential run-throughs, getting ready for opening night on March 2. Performances will continue through March 18 on Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m., in the Theatre Works Auditorium in the First Universalist Church, 78 Earle St.

The musical has been done in movies and on stage, with the most famous of the latter being the version with Yul Brynner as the King. The story is about the King of Siam, a tradition-bound potentate who is having a tough time adapting to change, and the spunky English woman, Anna, he hires to tutor his many children and who, along the way, helps bring the King and his country into the modern world. As East meets West, they both learn some lessons, not the least of which is about falling in love.

It's a lively show filled with music that sticks in your head, like "Getting to Know You" and "Shall We Dance?" Like much of Rodgers and Hammerstein's work, moreover, the show has

Good food and entertainment

WOONSOCKET — Good food and good entertainment in support of the arts is the offer, and you can get it at the First Universalist Church, home to both Theatre Works theater company and the Center for the Arts and Spirituality, on March 3 at 6:15 p.m.

For \$20, participants will get a chef-prepared meal served to them while being serenaded by classical guitarist Matthew Kearns. The menu includes family-style chicken, pasta, vegetables, salad and an array of desserts.

See **CHURCH** — Page D-2



Call Photo/Denis Rochefort

Anna, played by Kathy Donahue, and the King of Siam, Gregory Bonin, share a scene from the Theatre Works production of the musical 'The King and I,' which opens March 2. Playing some of the King's many children are, from left, Kelly Ryan, 10; Amelia Rayos, 8; Karissa Carson, 9; and Alicia Leclerc, 5.

some depth, gently raising issues of gender roles, tradition vs. change, and of discovering the things that are truly important in life.

As much as he likes the story, the music and the costumes, Anderson's focus, of late, has been on practical matters, like directing a royal family of 12. That's a lot of young actors to recruit and keep under control while they learn their parts.

"I'm impressed with their dedication," he says of the children — and their parents, he adds. He recognizes the youngsters have school responsibilities and shouldn't stay up too late, night after night. So, he has been rehearsing their scenes first and then sending them home.

There are a number of lines for the children, and Anderson has

See **KING** — Page D-2

King

Continued from Page D-1

tried to divvy them up so most everyone gets a chance to speak.

For the show to work, however, there has to be chemistry between the lead characters.

"That was one of the most difficult pairings," Anderson admits, so he sought out two actors whose work he had seen and liked. Kathy Donahue of Uxbridge, his Anna, has appeared with theater companies throughout Rhode Island, including Theater-by-the-Sea in Matunuck where she had the role of Sally Bowles in "Cabaret."

"She has a beautiful singing voice," Anderson says.

Greg Bonin of Woonsocket plays the King. He has been in a number of Theatre Works shows, including playing Nathan Detroit in "Guys and Dolls," and won first place in last year's Autumnfest Talent Competition.

One of their pivotal scenes is the "Shall We Dance?" number, in which the affection between Anna and the King surfaces.

"I worked extensively with them on that scene to convey the passion and the sexual tension between them," Anderson says.

Speaking of dance, Anderson is quick to share the spotlight with his choreographer, Jennifer Barrette, who has performed professionally at Theatre-by-the-Sea and on a tour of one of its shows and who also teaches drama at Woonsocket High School. Barrette, in fact, will choreograph the show this coming summer at the Matunuck theater.

He also highlights the work of Katie Estrella of North Attleboro who has been a musician for previous Theatre Works shows and is making her debut as musical director.

Sharing the backstage responsibilities are Mary Concannon of Lincoln, stage manager; Sharon Charrette of Woonsocket, costume coordinator and designer; and Connie Altimus, producer. Alice and Fred Reinhart of Woonsocket are helping with costumes and props, and Seville Dye Works is credited with donating material for the same.

"We have such wonderful talent in our area's community theater pool that I knew we would have a great opportunity to showcase that talent with this show," Anderson said.

"This show has something for everyone. There's romance, a strong plot line about doing the right thing and, of course, lots of adorable children," Anderson said.

Tickets for "The King and I" are \$13 for adults, \$10 for children age 12 and younger. Call the reservation line at (401) 766-1898.