

# feels LIKE home

by michelle groleau engel '97

At first glance, the Croswell Opera House doesn't seem terribly remarkable. The brick façade blends in with the other buildings in downtown Adrian. Only the fancy marquee perched above the door sets it apart. Inside, the empty theatre is chilly. The red seats look like the seats in any other theatre. The vacant stage is dimly lit, and one lone worker is building scenery while his radio plays quietly.

But to **Cindy Farnham '95**, the Croswell is more than just Michigan's oldest theatre. It's home. The performers are family. Cindy is the marketing director at the Croswell, but she has

**"I would stay at the Croswell the rest of my life if I could"**

also performed in shows there. She has worked as a director, a stage manager, and a production assistant on Croswell shows. She has painted scenery, assembled props, and even worked in the box office.

Cindy wasn't always so involved in theatre. She had performed in a few church skits and a handful of high school plays, but didn't get serious about theatre until her sophomore year at the College. During her freshman year, a friend persuaded her to attend auditions for a campus play. She got a part, had fun, and auditioned again the next year. That second show, "Look Homeward, Angel," led Cindy to pursue a career in theatre.

"It was a great show," she said. "There were a lot of wonderful people in it. It was just a wonderful production, and

I became close with a lot of those people. That started me on my path into the theatre business."

As Cindy became more involved with Adrian's theatre department, she added a theatre minor to her studies. That minor evolved into a second major, and Cindy left Adrian with a bachelor's degree in English literature and theatre. During her last semester, Mary Scott, artistic director at the Croswell, was directing a show at the College and suggested that Cindy audition for the summer season.

"I was completely blown away by the audition process," Cindy said. "It was completely new to me."

Cindy landed a role in "The Will Rogers Follies,"

then went on to work as stage manager for the next two shows at the Croswell. She earned a master's degree in theatre directing from Miami University, then returned to Adrian because it felt like home.

"I love this place," Cindy said. "The more involved I became with the Croswell, the more I loved the people. The Croswell's a great building - a wonderful building - with lots of history, but I love the people who come here, who perform on the stage."

Although her work at the Croswell keeps her busy, Cindy tries to perform in one or two shows a year. She also directs when she can. In January, she performed in "The Importance of Being Ernest" at the Croswell. This fall, she will direct a new piece that Technical Director Don Wilson has written,

based on Washington Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow."

"We're very excited about it," Cindy said. "It's a whole new work developing. Nothing has been done on this before, so it's all us. We don't have any guidelines; we can put all of us into it. It's a totally new creative experience. I love working on new pieces."

The Croswell Opera House plays a big role in Cindy's future plans as an actress and director.

"As long as I'm involved with theatre, I want to continue directing and performing," she said. "I love this place. I would stay at the Croswell the rest of my life if I could. I would love to see this place evolve into a nationally recognized theatre and see the community become more aware of it and embrace it more. I don't think people realize what a treasure they have, right here in their own back yard."

"I could go to New York or Chicago," she added, "but I don't belong there. Chicago and New York don't need another me. If I've got the ability to make dreams come true for people in

this community, who don't have the opportunity to go to New York or Chicago and become a big star, then this is where I belong. This is my home."



Cindy Farnham '95

Freelance writer **Michelle Groleau Engel '97** lives in Dundee.



Cindy Farnham '95, marketing director at the Croswell Opera House, plays Cecily in a recent production of "The Importance of Being Earnest".