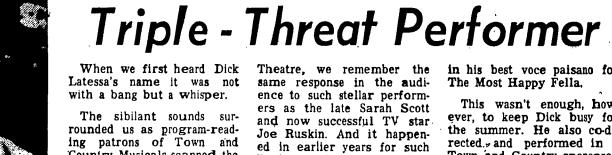


## Dick Latessa



Country Musicals scanned the list of performers to find the name of a man who had become a playgoer's favorite.

In his second season at the East Rochester summer theatre, Dick Latessa.proved himself a triple threat performer — he sings, he dances and he acts. And you can underline each talent.

The whispered sounds -"that's Dick Latessa," "what's Dick Latessa playing" -- did not come from a select few. There were teenagers struck by his charm and Latin handsomeness, but there were middle-aged and experienced theatre-goers who felt the wonderful and constant rapport that spells entertainment.

in his best voce paisano for The Most Happy Fella. same response in the audience to such stellar perform-

This wasn't enough, however, to keep Dick busy for the summer. He also co-directed.» and performed in a Town and Country sponsored Rochester favorites as Bert series of children's plays. Lytell, Louis Calhern and, be-And here you really touch a fore them, this city's own Latessa soft spot - kids. He says they are the greatest audience in the world and whipped cream for the per-

> cident in this season's production of Robin Hood in which Dick as the famous hero of Sherwood Forest was being pursued by the villain of the piece.

> The villain's little boy was a member of the audience and watched the chase on stage with mounting excitement. When Robin finally climbed a tree to escape the villain, the little boy cried out - "Look out, daddy, he's



Jessie Bonesteele. Rewarding as such response is to the actor, it also carries with it a responsibility former. to the audience, according to He was reminded of an in-Dick Latessa. It keeps the performer on his toes - he must always give his best because he owes his best. This summer we saw Dick Latessa satirize a hip-swinging Presley-like crooner in

Bye Bye Birdie, slink into a Damon Runyonized version of a racetrack tout in Do Re Me and emerge, pure as the driven snow, a love-sick Scotsman in Brigadoon. One week he was a slick-tongued New York newspaper man facing hiding in the tree!" star Pat Carroll in Wonder-

We have seen this happen ful Town and later in the seain the past. During the days son he stretched the vocal of the now-defunct Arena chords to render Abbondanza

Dick Latessa anxiously awaits January when his wife Shirley will present him with the first member of his own private children's audience.

began his career as a dancer on local TV programs. Later he joined the famed Karamu Theatre, first integrated drama group in the country.

-on a newspaper, as a truck driver, on a factory assembly line and, well, you name it. Also there was a fwo year "vacation" in the U.S. Army.

Dick will open tomorrow night for the beginning of a nine - performance run in Music Theatre's production of The King and I as the starcrossed lover, Lun Tha. Then it's back to New York with Shirley, baby-to-be and all, where last year he played the season in an off-Broadway revival of The Golden Apple.

Not yet the star he may become, Dick Latessa's name has started with a happy whisper in Rochester - we can hope that it attains a resounding Broadway bang.

Story by Bob Smett

Top left, top right and clown photos furnished by Dick Latessa, others by Paul Contestable.

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A native of Cleveland, Dick

And there were other jobs









