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(F10)

Pianist switches to jazz after OU studies program

By JIM WINDELL

"When I first heard the kind of jazz they were playing at Oakland University, I knew it was for me," Andrea Cheolas said.

A classical piano student since age 9, she usually played music by Chopin, Debussy and Mozart. Continuing her studies in music theory and music education at the university near Rochester, she also felt under the spell of the then Jazz Studies Program and Doc Holladay. Warming up to her favorite subject, she said, "When you know you're clicking, when you and the bass and the drums are hitting right on with rhythm, then wow! It's a real rush."

All of which explains why feminine, petite Andrea Cheolas of the big brown eyes and the appearance of your basic Sunday School teacher is a jazz pianist.



Andrea Cheolas, who plays jazz piano, is currently appearing at Sir Charles Pub in Royal Oak. (Photo by Jim Wendell)

"I KNOW I don't look like I'm serious about the music," Ms. Cheolas lamented, sipping coffee during a Saturday afternoon interview at Ferndale's Delta Lady. "For a couple of years, I've had to prove myself."

At first, getting the chance to prove herself was difficult. When she asked to sit in on Detroit jam sessions, the usual response was, "Oh, do you sing?" Being a young, innocent-looking female has had its drawbacks.

Just being female is also a barrier she found. "You have to play, if not better, at almost pretty well in order to be recognized. Jazz is male-dominated."

But Andrea Cheolas (her name is pronounced Chi-o-las) is making headway as a jazz pianist. For near-

ly a year, she has led her own trio at Sir Charles Pub in Royal Oak (Woodward at 11 Mile Road). She has also had gigs at the Delta Lady, Union Street in Detroit and the Back Seat in West Bloomfield.

SOME OF the finest jazz pianists in the metro area have helped teach her to play jazz. At Oakland University, she was able to study with Harold McKinney, and after graduation she worked privately with Matt Michaels.

He was recommended to her by noted vibist Jack Brokensha (she still gives piano lessons to the youngest Brokensha, 12-year-old Niki), and Ms. Cheolas says of Michaels, "He gave me my big start."

More recently, her teacher has

been Charlie Boles, also a well-known Detroit pianist, who has been helping her become more proficient with chord changes. "Now," she admits, "I'm always thinking two, five, one in my head. It's a 24-hour-a-day job."

Although the east-side-of-Detroit native said, "Everything I do is music," she doesn't regret the amount of time devoted to jazz. By nature she is something of a perfectionist, and she doesn't believe in splitting her life into many parts.

"TO DO anything well," she maintains, "you have to give your life to it and not split yourself."

Which is why she used her teaching certificate from Oakland Uni-

versity for only part of a year after her graduation a few years back. It was her parents' idea to get the teaching certificate as "something to fall back on," she always wanted to be a performer.

She is working on a master's degree in special education, but "music is my main thing."

With her trio, including Chris Snyder on bass and George Larsen on drums, Ms. Cheolas plays a variety of pop tunes and jazz standards Thursday-Saturday nights at Sir Charles Pub.

When the trio digs into Horace Silver's "Song for My Father," the standard "Dear Old Stockholm" or Oliver Nelson's "Solen Moments," her solo efforts show her fondness for such famed jazz pianists as McCoy Tyner and Bill Evans.

SHE IS FAR FROM satisfied with her playing, and her drive for flawless comes through as she talks about her style. "I want to get into my own style," she said, earnestly. "I still think in some ways I'm trying to copy some of my idols."

"I want to get things perfect and I know that's hard, but I want a tight sound. I want to be able to play all styles of jazz and then to have my own style."

She said she views playing regularly in a club like Sir Charles Pub as an opportunity for personal growth as a musician. Like many another local musician, Andrea Cheolas is looking and waiting for the break that will bring a recording contract or working out of the metro Detroit area.

Her more immediate goal is, however, simpler and more basic. "Most of all," she concedes, "I want to be respected as a pianist."

Band plays celestial rock music

By NICK CHARLES

The heavenly music of Angel will be heard Wednesday at Detroit's Cobo Hall.

Angel will be just one of the bands featured in the rock and roll marathon. The show also will include Mother's Finest, the heavy metal of Frank Marino and Mahogany Rush. Headlining will be Humble Pie.

Angel has just released its sixth album, "Live Without a Net" (Casablanca). The band is fairly unknown to most metropolitan Detroiters.

The last time Angel was seen in this area was back in 1977 when the group played The Royal Oak Music Theatre. At that time Angel was on tour promoting its third album, "On Earth As It Is in Heaven."

Its music has been compared to E.L.P. and Yes, as well as being called a cross between Led Zeppelin and Queen.

ANGEL CLAIMS THAT its live shows are what the group does best. However, its albums are tighter and less nerve-gangling.

Angel is five talented young men who are trying to bring glamour back to rock and roll.

Keyboardist Greg Guffria, from Mississippi, played with David and the Giants before joining Angel. He names The Beatles, Jeff Beck and J.S. Bach as his major influences.

Bassist Felix Robinson replaced Mickey Jones and made his debut on the fourth album, "White Hot." Robinson is from St. Louis and also plays piano, trumpet, trombone and guitar.

Master guitarist Edwin Lionel Meadows (better known as "Punky") lives by the beach in Los Angeles. In his spare time he likes to relax, play with his cats and do "just normal stuff."

LEAD VOCALIST Frank DiMino is the group's lunatic, as well as the group's intellectual. The Boston-born DiMino was discovered singing to screaming fans in a Massachusetts junior high school.

Drummer Barry Brandt, who was



Angel band members are (from left) Felix Robinson, Barry Brandt, Frank DiMino, Punky Meadows and Greg Guffria.

born in Washington D.C. (like Meadows), names Queen as his favorite group. He played with DiMino in the group Max in 1973 before joining Angel.

The majority of Angel's material is written by Meadows, Bluffin and DiMino.

The double live album contains 16 cuts from Angel's history.

Five of the songs are from the "White Hot" album, such as "Got Love If You Want It," "Don't Leave Me Lonely" and the Young Rascal remake, "I Ain't Gonna Eat Out My Heart Anymore."

Four of the songs are from the band's "On Earth As It Is in Heaven"

L.P., such as "Can You Feel It," "White Lightning" (which features Brandt's drum solo) and the classic "Telephone Exchange."

"Feelin' Right" from Angel's second album, "Helluva Band," showcases Guffria and Meadows as they trade off solos and Jeff Beck licks.

ANGEL PROVES THAT its band-

members are really "rock and rollers"

on precisely that tune from the debut L.P., entitled, simply "Angel." The song throbs with Punky's guitar extravaganzas.

Angel left out many songs from less commercial days. Surprisingly enough the group does include the lengthy

"Tower."

The Los Angeles crowd seemed to enjoy the old Mott the Hoople tune "All the Young Dudes" (written by David Bowie), which DiMino calls an old Angel favorite.

Only one song from the tremendous last studio album, "Sinful," was used. It's called "Wild and Hot."

The new album also contains the song "20th Century Foxes" from the soon-to-be-released Casablanca movie "Fores."

Vocals that can shatter your contact lenses, glamour rock and fantastic musicianship, all mixed with a little magic, is what Angel has up its sleeve for the Cobo Hall concert.

Focal Point emphasizes film, videotape

Focal Point, an intensive seminar in film and videotape, will be held June 22-28 at Kingswood School Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills.

Enrollment is limited to 28 participants in super 8mm filmmaking and 12 in videotape production. Fee is \$225. Boarding is available for an additional

\$75. All materials and equipment are supplied.

Focal Point participants receive practical instruction in a workshop format and make their own films and videotapes. Guest artists exhibit and discuss their work nightly.

Project administrator is Nadine

Maynard, film instructor at Kingswood School.

Focal Point filmmaking instructor is John Prusak, professional photographer/cinematographer and winner of a bronze Hugo Award at the Chicago International Film Festival. John Walter, producer/director of Legal Tapes, Inc.

and former television broadcast technician, will instruct the video segment of the program.

Both Prusak and Walter are current board members of Detroit Area Film Teachers. For more information, call Ms. Maynard at 645-3400.

At Will-O-Way Strong acting punches drama

By MATT GERSON

The Will-O-Way Repertory Company presentation of Tennessee Williams' "A Streetcar Named Desire" is a searing duel of animal desire.

Brute male machismo grapples with a vice-born female. Steve Lavender as Stanley Kowalski and nine-year Will-O-Way veteran Eileen Weiss as Blanche DuBois wonderfully capture their characters' simmering sexual and violent natures in memorable performances.

"A Streetcar Named Desire" continues at 8:30 p.m. Friday-Saturday and April 4-6 at Will-O-Way Apprentice Theatre in Bloomfield Township.

Ms. Weiss' Blanche is arrogant, critical of the less refined, attractive or glibly poetic. But once she moves into the Kowalskis' tenement, in the French quarter of New Orleans, a drink is never far from her viceroy of education and innocence.

A SATCHEL of glittering furs and dresses under her supposed "school superintendent" job background.

Blanche's "nervous condition" that caused her to get a "leave of absence," manifests itself in a wide array of nervous quivers and ample use of her hankie. She wipes her face under Stanley's questioning like a convict under interrogation.

Steve Lavender's Stan is unsmiling, quiet, moosey, surly but characterized by an uneasy calm. Suddenly rousing emerges from that unhappy combination. His tantrums—particularly the one when he throws Blanche's radio out the window—remind one of an erupting volcano.

The cry-baby-like aspect of his primitive attempts at remorse are icily expressed by Lavender.

It must be admitted it's a bit different to see a Stanley with a well-grown mustache. Lavender looks more like a young Ernest Hemingway than Marlon Brando.

PAULA KEINERT is a buxom, big-boned Stella, a true earth-mother type, patient and loving despite her callous, overbearing, apakelike-downright subhuman (in Blanche's pungent description) husband.

Producer leads whirlwind life

By HELEN ZUCKER

Producer Karen Kantor of "The All Night Strut," playing through April 12 at the Birmingham Theatre, had just finished a live radio interview, talked with two reporters, and done a fast whirl through Birmingham shops before returning to the theater.

Dressed in a rose-colored crewneck sweater, pressed jeans, and black cowboy boots, Karen looked alert, ready for anything.

"All I've seen of Michigan is Birmingham, Metro Airport, the Southfield freeway, and the inside of this theater. I want to come back. This looks like a good theater town."

"Actually," she said with a grin, "I want to take 'All Night Strut' around the country, possibly to Europe. I'm exploring places abroad now."

"And I'm opening a production of 'Stage Door' on Broadway next year. It's a new musical based on the Ferber and Kaufman play."

"I love musicals. When they work, everybody leaves on an energy high. 'All Night Strut' depends totally on four terrific singers and a really good band. There's no theme, just great music from the '30s and '40s, an era I love and respect."

Ms. KANTOR HAS AN INTENSE, serious, attractive face. When she laughs, her eyes light up with quick intelligence and her mouth puckers like a mischievous child.

"Most of the reviews during the five years 'Strut' has been playing have been very good," she said. "But we got panned by a few critics in Boston who said we didn't recreate the era as they remembered it."

"I'm not trying to recreate an era. I wasn't born until after the Depression and World War II. How could I recreate an era I haven't lived through? What I can do is appreciate the great music that came out of the Depression era."

"The music stands for itself. 'All Night Strut' isn't a parody. Bette Midler does parodies. This show isn't—it's a musical celebration of the '30s and '40s."

Ms. Kantor is a hard-working, totally unpretentious young woman. She has

Ms. Keinert's seems to lack some emotional power and reason for Stella's taking all the abuse. Stella just seems to live for those big bear-hugs from Stanley, with whom she shares something of a motherly understanding and animal desire.

Michael Coburn is a quite youngish Mitch, and his short and fateful wailing, then distancing from Blanche, seems out of joint. Ms. Weiss looks and acts too experienced, and even too old, in their encounters.

Mitch comes over like a very similarly built but completely contrasting personality to Stanley. Coburn plays his part with great understatement and perfect nice-guy innocence.

WATCHING BLANCHE is a study in emotional poses. There is shocked recognition; dreamy escapades into little-girl fantasies during the climactic moments in the last act; flirty, ingratiating words and playful fluffing of Stanley's hair; and disarming singing in her constant hot tubs echoing from an offstage door.

She's a booming, eerily guilty powerhouse actress, Ms. Weiss. She manages to make Blanche, finally, somehow a sad victim of lost young love, her own excesses, and unadaptability in the normal world.

Credits should go to the set construction people for making a spare, suitably aged and cheap-looking tenement apartment.

And also to Director Celia Merrill Turner—despite some scenes being played in almost (to the viewer) total darkness, with just shapes being seen and voices heard. She has done admirable job on a very long, anguishing and harrowing study of raw emotions and manipulations of one type of person by another.

Will-O-Way again gives its best. Even if you have to wade across to no-man's land of mud over a narrow set of planks to get there.

been called a jack of all trades by her mother.

Ms. Kantor said simply, "You know, the funny thing is, that's exactly what a good producer has to be. I had an instant love affair with the theater, but I'm not at all interested in acting."

"IT NEVER OCCURRED to me that lights, sets, all the work that goes on behind the scenes existed. But I got involved in the Columbia Liberation movement, a group of women who played the women's parts in Shakespeare."

She laughed. "What the movement did was teach me about the work involved in production, and I learned that I was good at organizing, getting things done. I got too restless to stay in school."

"I dropped out of Barnard and got a \$15 a week job at the Roundabout Theatre. I painted everything: the floors, the walls, the chairs, the sets, watered plants, bought the coffee, learned a lot about tech, and went on to work at other theaters. It helps to be in the right place at the right time."

Ms. KANTOR gives the impression she is capable of working like nine speedy stagehands if the occasion arises.

"One day I asked myself: what's the most powerful position in the theater? Answer: The producer. So here I am."

Ms. Kantor stood up, picked up her coat, and said, "I have to catch a noon flight. I have a four o'clock appointment in New York. But I'll be back. This is a good show."

"It's been running since it opened in Cleveland in 1975, before 'Bubbling Brown Sugar,' before the nostalgia craze. Disco has disappeared. 'Chattanooga Choo Choo,' 'As Time Goes By' and 'Lullaby of Broadway' are here to stay."