

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



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(Right) Sarkis Halajian rehearses the Cranbrook Jazz Band, in the outdoor setting where it will perform at Le Gala de Cuisine. (Top left) Nicola Sussor, 17, and Steve Schiff, 17, are members of the Jessica Sinclair Dancers, also featured entertainers at Le Gala. (Bottom left) Peter Goldberg Sr., 18, plays the baritone sax in the jazz band.



Le Gala: Music, dance back up event

By Ethel Simmons
staff writer

AT LE GALA DE CUISINE, not only will guests be stuffing themselves with glorious food but they also will be enjoying music and dance — performed by students at Cranbrook Kingswood Schools.

The elegant food festival, which is in its eighth year, has expanded its offerings of cuisine prepared by some of the finest chefs in the Detroit area. Along with more lavish presentations of culinary delights, entertainment has been given increased emphasis, to create an all-around total festival.

Presented the first Sunday in May, as a harbinger of spring, the festival this year will be 3-7 p.m. outdoors on the Quadrangle at Cranbrook School and indoors at the school's Great Dining Hall. (For information, call 646-3134.) Once again, there will be music by choral and instrumental groups, highlighted by the Cranbrook Jazz Band, and dance by the Jessica Sinclair Dancers.

BAND DIRECTOR Sarkis Hal-

ajian, who is responsible for the jazz band and a classical flute duo that will play during Le Gala, talked about changes in the festival entertainment through the years.

"We've increased the numbers," he said. "When we started out, we only had a couple of different ensembles. The kids really enjoy performing. It's a food spectacular, and they enjoy eating after the performance."

Music will be presented both indoors and out, at various locations during the hours of Le Gala. Guests at the big party (which is a benefit for Cranbrook Kingswood Schools) can snack during the performances, or just take a breather to look and listen to the talented performers.

The Chamber Singers, a coed choir; the Madrigal Singers, a female chorus, and a classical string quintet are other groups that will appear at Le Gala.

Much of the entertainment will be centered at an area just outside the library, where the public-address system is set up during the festival. Here the Cranbrook Jazz Band will play its popular selections from the big-band era. The Jessica Sinclair

Dancers will perform alone and, in one instance, do a number with the band.

EACH YEAR, some couples get out on the flagstones and dance while the band plays. No dance area, as such, is set aside. "People would love to dance," Halajian said. "The problem is a matter of space."

"At Le Gala, we play everything from 'Tuxedo Junction' to 'In the Mood,' 'String of Pearls' and 'Pennsylvania 6-5000' — all the big-band charts of Glenn Miller. In addition, we will do some contemporary charts. We zero in on big bands of the '30s and '40s," he said.

One of the reasons the jazz band concentrates on the big-band era during Le Gala is because this kind of music has a special appeal for the festivalgoers. Halajian said, "The age group that day is 40-70."

EVERY YEAR but one the sun has smiled and shone on Le Gala de Cuisine. "If it rains, the jazz band still performs outdoors but under a tent. One year it rained. The kids played their hearts out that year," Halajian said.

Not only will the band be playing, but some Cranbrook students will get a chance to sing with the musicians. "As many as a dozen boys and girls from the choir will audition and perform on a couple of big band numbers," he said. "They can ham it up."

Asked what her dancers would do this year, Jessica Sinclair said, "I choreographed a suite of dances for Broly Day (a recent event at Cranbrook). They use parasols. We were rained out one year (at Le Gala). This year, if they use the umbrellas, they could perform rain or shine."

THE DANCE director said all 10 dancers in the troupe are in the dance program for the entire year. "This is just one of the events they perform at," she noted.

For Le Gala, she selects dances that are going to look good outdoors. "That don't need any special lighting effects, are fun to do and don't require any concentration on the part of the audience because the air is so festive and the audience just wants to be entertained," Sinclair said.

Staff photos by Gary Caskey

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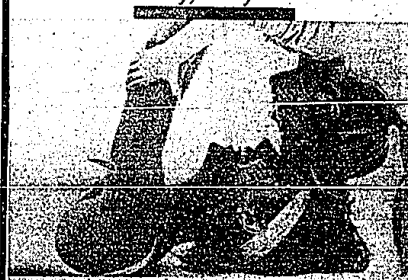
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