

# Entertainment

Keely Wygonik editor/953-2105



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O17C

## Rhythm & Blues Concert celebrates ethnic, racial diversity

Rhythm & Blues a benefit performance featuring the area's top jazz performers, 6:45 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 24 at Oakland Community College, Orchard Ridge Campus-Smith Auditorium, 27055 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills. Tickets \$15 in advance (\$15 at the door) and are tax-deductible. Call 647-0375 or 354-4854 for information.

By Stewart Francke  
special writer

IN THE 60's and early 70's, Detroit was renowned both for its incendiary Rhythm and Blues and the music's message of love, compassion, and tolerance.

When Motown left for Los Angeles, smaller labels — Golden World, Fortune, Rik-Tik — failed to continue developing the monumental talent that remained. Yet an enormously strong R&B scene remains. Detroit may have the best soul bands, white and black, playing live night to night in the world.

Next Thursday, October 24, The Oakland County Center for Open Housing will celebrate United Nations Day with an All Star concert titled "An Evening of Rhythm and Blues."

THE PERFORMANCE will honor and extend this Detroit musical legacy while simultaneously benefiting the Oakland County Center for Open Housing's Community Outreach program. The lineup is extraordinary: Ursula Walker/Buddy Budson, Trio, George Benson and Friends, Norma Jean Bell, and Alexander Zonjic.

These selected performers represent a wonderful cross section of R&B and jazz performers from the greater Detroit Area.

**'We think United Nations Day is the perfect opportunity to recognize the unique cultural similarities and differences among us through the international language of music.'**

— Barbara Talley

"We think United Nations Day is the perfect opportunity to recognize the unique cultural similarities and differences among us through the international language of music," said OCCOH Co-Director Barbara Talley.

"It's an overflow from all of the other activities we do in terms of race relations. They are also well known performers; they represent a common goal."

"The concert is a celebration of Oakland County's ethnic and racial diversity," added co-director Ann Wettlaufer.

The concert is viewed by its organizers as a means of gaining community support and educating Oakland County of the OCCOH's purpose.

"Our purpose," Talley adds, "is to promote integration through housing in Oakland County. We want people to be aware of all of their options regarding housing while at the same time work toward achieving a stable and integrated situation."

The peerless performers include Ursula Walker/Buddy Budson, saxophonist, Trio, George Benson and Friends, Norma Jean Bell, and Alexander Zonjic. Zonjic has previously released five records under various labels. Although Zonjic has performed at Car-

negie Hall, the Apollo Theater and the Hollywood Bowl, he still plays extensively in the area. Zonjic first emerged as a major national talent after studying under the DSO's Ervin Monroe, who was later "discovered" by the famed jazz pianist and arranger Bob James.

URSULA WALKER and her husband Budson have extensive credits. She is a Clio Award Winner and a frequent performer with the Stan Kenton Band; he has arranged and toured with the likes of Buddy Rich and the Four Tops. They also regularly play area clubs, hotels and concerts.

Norma Jean Bell is a fiery performer; her saxophone and vocal capabilities complement each other expertly. Her alto playing is in the rolling, braying style of King Curtis or Junior Walker while her vocals are more mellifluous, rendering popular dance hits of today with uniquely. She and her band are currently in the middle of a long, sold-out stay at Doug's Body Shop in Ferndale.

Saxophonist Benson suffers from a continual, and erroneous, comparison to the unrelated, albeit more famous, guitarist named George Benson. Yet this Benson's group is one of the most popular pop-style jazz groups in Detroit. When not playing clubs, Benson joins the Austin-Morris band or the DSO. He also teaches at Wayne State University.

OAKLAND COUNTY can be a daunting place for those seeking social equity; music seems to be one specific area of common ground. This concert, as well as other examples — the great blues queen Juanita McCray packing in an all-white crowd at the Avon Lanes in Avon Township — evidence that Detroit music is truly one-language-ignorant of race.



Ursula Walker and Buddy Budson are part of the all-star jazz lineup performing Oct. 24 at a benefit performance for the Oakland County Center for Open Housing at Oakland Community College, Orchard Ridge Campus-Smith Auditorium in Farmington Hills.



Norma Jean Bell is known for her rhythm and blues performances on saxophone and vocals.



Saxophonist George Benson has two albums to his credit.



Alexander Zonjic, internationally renowned flutist, plays extensively in the area.

## Colorful costumes, wonderful music, cast in 'The King and I'

Performances of the Jewish Community Center and Gurwin production of "The King and I" continue through Oct. 27 at the Aaron DeRoy Theatre at the JCC, 6600 West Maple Road, West Bloomfield. For ticket information call the JCC at 661-1100 or Gurwin at 354-0545.

"The King and I" may well be the most joyous of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals. The current version by Nancy Gurwin Productions at the Jewish Community Center captures all of the show's zest and charm.

The large cast includes some excellent principals, and the choreography and staging are well-adapted

to the confines of the small stage. Colorful costumes adequately compensate for the almost non-existent sets, and every one of the many musical numbers sounds wonderful.

In the 1880's English schoolteacher Anna Leonowens (Joanne Kollins DeLong) comes to the court of Siam to teach the royal children, and consequently influences the King (Jerry Sina) as well. It is a time when Siam is trying to find its place as a modern nation, and the monarchy is torn between hanging on to traditional ways and understanding new ones.

AS ANNA, DeLong is outstanding in every respect. Her exceptional talent handles all of her musical numbers with dazzling skill, including the exuberant "I Whistle a Ho-

py Tune." "Getting to Know You," and "Shall We Dance" and the plaintive "Hello Young Lovers." Her acting ability is solid as well. She has a strong stage presence that readily conveys all of Anna's spunk, persistence, and the haughty disdain one expects yet combining it with a twinkling eye that shows the King's mischievous side. He is always an authoritative presence, both speaking and singing.

Abba Mangrulkar is an engaging Tuptim, the unhappy slave who has been sent to the King as a gift, but pines for the man she really loves. She offers lovely renditions of "My Lord and Master," "We Kiss in a Shadow," and "I Have Dreamed," and captures all of Tuptim's suppressed rage when reciting "The Small House of Uncle Thomas."

As Lady Thiang, the King's number one wife, Mary Ann Krygier's powerful voice soars in "Something Wonderful" and the several other numbers in which she leads the chorus of the King's most favored wives.

YOUNG DAVID Lahgan is excellent as Anna's son Louis. He has a confident line delivery and a fine voice that belts out "I Whistle a Happy Tune" and "A Puzzle-ment."

Patrick Lokey is effective as the Crown Prince and credibly conveys the youngster's confusion between the old ways and the new.

Samuel Perry is competent as Lun Tha, Tuptim's frustrated true love, and Pascal McGaffey is appropriately sinister as the King's disapproving Prime Minister.

Director/choreographer Kathi Bush does a very good job of handling the large chorus of royal wives, children, and slaves, and the "Small

House of Uncle Thomas" ballet is especially well-done within the small space.

The royal children are every bit as adorable as one expects, still one more aspect of this production that charms and delights.

Barbara Michaels is a retired Southfield English teacher. A theater critic for the last 17 years, she is an inveterate playgoer who regularly catches up on all the New York productions.

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