



Three generations of Armfeldts pose for a family portrait in the Ridgedale Players production of "A Little Night Music," (810) 988-7049.



A spring tradition continues with Cranbrook Institute of Science's Maple Syrup Festival. Call (810) 645-3200.



Over 3,000 dogs from across the country will compete for honors at the 78th Annual Detroit Kennel Club Dog Show at Cobo Center, (810) DKC-SHOW.



Hot six: Mickey Mouse as the Sorcerer's Apprentice introduces Goofy and his teenage son Max to a world of imagination in "Walt Disney's World on Ice" at Joe Louis Arena through March 10. Call (810) 645-6666 for tickets.

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

WHAT TO DO, WHERE TO GO

Correctly guess the winners of the Academy Awards to win an AAC Movie pass. See Movie page inside for details on how to enter the Observer & Eccentric Oscar Contest.



CLIVE COOTE

In the running: "Sense and Sensibility," one of the Oscar nominations for Best Picture, features (left to right) Elinor (Emma Thompson), Marianne (Kate Winslet), and Mrs. Dashwood (Gemma Jones). Thompson was nominated Best Actress, and Winslet, Best Supporting Actress.

Oscar choices show sense & sensibility

BY JOHN MONAGHAN
SPECIAL WRITER

I have cheered twice for Babe the Gallant Pig in the last year — once when he won the national sheep herding finals and again, last month, when he nosed his way into an Oscar nomination for Best Picture of 1995.

Another "Doctor Doolittle," some groaned, recalling the embarrassing 1968 nomination (it lost to "In the Heat of the Night"), but with one big difference: "Babe" really was the best film of last year. See it and you might agree.

Looking back, the most amazing thing about 1995 wasn't the quality of films that Hollywood produced — it was a mediocre year at best. It's how much sense (and sensibility) the industry showed in its nominations for this 68th edition of the Academy Awards.

Below you will find a rundown of the major categories, pretty much in the order they'll be presented on March 25. Be warned in advance that, despite the pretense of assurance below, my predictions are usually shaky at best. Just what did happen to Anna Paquin, anyway?

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS

Joan Allen and Kathleen Quinlan played "Stand By Your Man" in "Nixon" and "Apollo 13." Kate Winslet cried "How Can You Mend a Broken Heart?" in "Sense and Sensibility." Mira Sorvino performed a whole slew of songs in "Georgia," but no one paid to listen. It was Mira Sorvino who hit all the right notes as the most memorable Woody Allen creation since "Annie Hall." And you remember how Oscar liked her. The Winner: Mira Sorvino in "Mighty Aphrodite."

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR

You can pick this one pretty much by process of elimination. Kevin Spacey and Tim Roth might deserve it, but both are still paying dues. Method act as he might, Brad Pitt still hasn't proven himself as anything but the sexiest man alive. James Cromwell as "Bebe's" keeper? No chance. The only question



ANDREW COOPER

Best director nominee: Mel Gibson stars in and directs the epic drama "Braveheart." Gibson was nominated for Best Director.

here: Will this well-known character actor wear his lucky Mission Control vest to the festivities? The Winner: Ed Harris in "Apollo 13"

BEST ACTRESS

Not a fan of the actress or the material, I thoroughly enjoyed Meryl Streep in "The Bridges of Madison County." It's just not her

year. Susan Sarandon must still suffer for using the Oscar podium for political ramblings. Sharon Stone and Elisabeth Shue both logged quality time in Vegas but won't come home any richer. The real winner is Emma Thompson, who delivered a one-two punch as writer and star of the best literary adaptation in years. The Winner: Emma Thompson in "Sense and Sensibility."

BEST ACTOR

Massimo Troisi for "The Postman" and no John Travolta for "Get Shorty." Something is definitely wrong with this picture. At least Oscar was smart enough to give Tom Hanks a year off. What's left are a pair of actors (Anthony Hopkins and Richard Dreyfuss) who have both won before and a couple (Nicolas Cage and Sean Penn) who deliver the kind of performances that Oscar really likes — a drunk and a convict. The Winner: Nicolas Cage in "Leaving Las Vegas"

BEST DIRECTOR

Follow me here: a few years ago bland actor Kevin Costner did the Oregon Well thing in "Dances With Wolves." He won. Mel Gibson produced, directed, and starred in "Braveheart" with even better results. Now consider that Tim Robbins is the only familiar name among the other nominees, and you'll have to concur. The Winner: Mel Gibson in "Braveheart."

BEST PICTURE

Traditionally the Best Director nod is a good indication of the Best Picture winner. Not so this year. For all its epic grandeur, "Braveheart" just doesn't have it. "Babe" does, but still won't be taken seriously enough to win. "Sense and Sensibility" is far too intelligent for the industry voters. The Italian-made "Postman" won't deliver. Bet instead on a movie so well-liked, so well-reviewed, and so darned American that it almost can't lose. Step right up to the microphone, Opie. The Winner: "Apollo 13."

For the sake of that passionate pig, I'd love to be proven wrong.

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CLASSICS



Ballet: Members of the St. Petersburg State Ballet Company "Rimsky-Korsakov" will perform at West Bloomfield High School on March 9.

Performances showcase world of talent

Some of Russia's most accomplished ballet dancers, the Atlanta Ensemble's, will perform at West Bloomfield High School on March 9 at Christ Church, Cranbrook. (Cranbrook at Lane Pine Road, one mile west of Woodward), Bloomfield Hills to benefit the church's organ restoration project.

■ The Atlanta Ensemble, a consortium of virtuoso musicians will perform a program of 19th-century piano trios 8 p.m. Friday, March 8 at Christ Church, Cranbrook. (Cranbrook at Lane Pine Road, one mile west of Woodward), Bloomfield Hills to benefit the church's organ restoration project.

■ Tickets are \$15 general admission, \$10 students, and available by calling (810) 644-5210, Ext. 4. A reception will follow the concert.

■ The Atlanta Ensemble — fortepianist Penelope Crawford, violinist Jaap Schroder and violoncellist Endi Sutherland — will play chamber music performed in mid-19th century

American concert halls by pianist/composer Sigismond Thalberg. The concert will also include works by Ludwig van Beethoven and Johann Nepomuk Hummel.

■ Ensemble members play period instruments. They have performed throughout the eastern United States, and recently recorded a two-CD set of the complete piano trios of Franz Schubert at Christ Church Cranbrook.

■ Artistic director and soloist Nikita Dolgushin has assembled an ensemble of soloists from the St. Petersburg State Ballet Company "Rimsky-Korsakov" to perform 8 p.m. Saturday, March 9 at West Bloomfield High School, 4926 Orchard Lake Road. Tickets are \$15, \$20, and \$25. To charge by phone, call The Dance Academy, (810) 869-9444. Tickets also available at European (810) 867-2146 and Orchard Family Restaurant

(810) 626-3722.

■ The company of renowned dancers includes Svetlana Efremova, Tatiana Kotchenko, Natalia Sholest, Tatiana Khabsayeva, Sergei Dmitriyev and Yuri Andreyev.

■ Dolgushin danced as a soloist for the Kirov Theatre in St. Petersburg and is now an artistic director at the St. Petersburg Conservatory.

■ This year's program includes Puni's "The Little Humpbacked Horse," "Fairy Doll" by Drigo, a selection from "The Nutcracker," Adan's "Le Sleeping Beauty."

■ Southfield Symphony Orchestra's fourth concert of the season features violinist Mark Lubotsky as guest soloist 7 p.m. Sunday, March 10 at St. Hugo of the Hills, 2215 Oakley Road, (north of Woodward) Bloomfield Hills. Tickets are \$10 adults, \$7 senior adults and students 18 and

younger. Call (810) 424-9022 or (810) 651-7408.

■ The SSO's 85 musicians from 36 area communities are joined by outstanding soloists of international reputation under the baton of conductor and music director Valery Leonov.

■ Lubotsky will be performing Beethoven's "Violin Concerto No. 1 in D Major for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 61." The program also features Tchaikovsky's "Hamlet Overture, Op. 67" and Prokofiev's "Symphony No. 7, Op. 131."

■ Born in Leningrad (St. Petersburg), Lubotsky attended Moscow's Central School of Music beginning at the age of seven and later attended the Moscow Conservatory. He won prizes at the Berlin Youth Festival and other competitions and went on to play and record with leading Soviet

See PERFORMANCES, inside