

# MOT from page D1

have been performed on any other stage in the region.

When asked if the MOT was a "one of the world's great opera companies" at the April 1996 opening of the extensively renovated Detroit Opera House, which he helped christen, Luciano Pavarotti responded that MOT wasn't among the best, yet. Pavarotti noted he might return when the MOT became a "great" opera company.

Based on DiChiera's estimate, Pavarotti should begin to plan his return to rechristen the Opera House before the turn of the millennium.

## Symbol of renaissance

A few weeks before the season-

opening performance of Verdi's "Aida," DiChiera contemplated the upcoming five-opera season, which next year will be expanded to six. He sat in the second-floor lounge where audiences congregated during intermissions at the Opera House. The minimal purple and silver art nouveau design recaptures the roaring spirit of the early 1920s when the theater was built.

As a master observer of gesture and symbolism, DiChiera motioned out the window to the soon-to-be-excavated parcels of land, future home to two state-of-the-art sports stadiums for the Detroit Lions and Detroit Tigers. Then he pointed westward to the likely site of one of the city's

three new casinos.

The city blocks around the Opera House are erupting with renewal projects. In a few years, the rejuvenated Grand Circus Park will be the area's major entertainment hub. And the Detroit Opera House, which ended a 14-year nomadic odyssey when it moved into the Opera House last year, stands as a symbol of the city's rich cultural past and promising future.

"The great thing about the Detroit Opera House is that we carry a symbolic feeling about the renaissance of Detroit," he said. "It doesn't have a commercial image. Certainly, a city with major museum, symphony and opera house has a feel of a major city."

## Renovations, Gershwin

# Paws from page D1

largely based upon Chief Seattle's words underscoring our connection with the environment. The work honors his daughter Colette, who was murdered at the age of 13 in 1981. Dog cherub angels stand guard on each side of the sculpture. A bronze centerpiece represents Molyneux's daughter. Two wolves howl at her sides. Engraved in the stone base are Chief Seattle's words, "We are part of the earth and it is part of us." CCS student Ben McRedmond helped construct the piece.

Chad Lockart of Kansas City, a junior in the Industrial Design department, wanted his art work to be functional so it would be easy to sell. "Sublimation," a sculptural lamp, reflects the human role in nurturing and protecting wildlife and natural resources. Three cast bronze owls, birds of prey, hover up at the top of the lamp. The lamp's free-form glass shade symbolizes nature and casts a pattern on ceiling and walls.

"The project was a good eye opener," said Lockart. "Originally, our world came from the natural world. More and more the natural world is becoming our modern world. It's becoming scary, seeing deer in the alley in New York. I wanted to get across the fragility, so the lamp's base has humans struggling together to put up this column, a symbol of achievement and possibly his biggest downfall."

Marco Garcia, a native of Mexico City now living in Ann Arbor, designed and constructed a "Jaguar Bench." Bronze jaguar

and location

"Aida," which opens Saturday, Sept. 20, was DiChiera's initial choice to open last season, which instead began with Puccini's "La Boheme." This season's subsequent operas include Mozart's "The Magic Flute" with Theresa Santiago and Kevin Bell; Massenet's "Manon," featuring opera-world stars Ruth Ann Swenson and Marcello Giordani; Donizetti's comedy, "The Elixir of Love," which returns to the MOT after 22 years; and, Gershwin's American classic, "Porgy and Bess."

Coincidentally, "Aida," the love story of an heroic Egyptian soldier and an enslaved Ethiopian princess, will be performed concurrent to the Detroit Institute of Arts' "Splendors of Ancient

Egypt" exhibit.

"In the future, we might begin to look at connections among what is being exhibited and performed," said DiChiera.

"The idea is to create a festival environment where we'd pick a theme, perhaps Russian art where the DIA would exhibit Russian artists, the DSO would perform the work of Russian composers and MOT would perform a Russian opera," he said. "Of course, it requires a lot of planning. But it does go on in other cities."

Since the early 1960s, DiChiera, one of the area's cultural ambassadors, has lent his vision to developing other local performing arts institutions, including the Oakland University music program, Meadow Brook Festival and Music Hall,

which he ran as a performing arts center.

Few have matched DiChiera's longevity and his ability to raise funds. For this upcoming season, DiChiera persuaded Ford Motor Company to fund the \$250,000 backstage renovations. In addition, the murals, decorative, paintings and staircases in the grand lobby have been restored through an anonymous fund.

"This is a culmination of a lifetime of work," he said. "We have a world-class home. And now, I just want to continue to work to enhance and stabilize it. I want to feel as if I gave something back."

If DiChiera has any doubts, maybe he should look out the window. The neighbors are arriving because of the location and the music in the air.



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# Conversations from page D1

Eisenhower expected a stronger response to the school's various classes of dancing classes. She didn't have to wait long to see if moving to Rochester Hills would be worthwhile.

When the doors opened last month, there was a lineup waiting to register for fall classes.

And despite few dance companies offering its performers year-round employment, EDE has increased its rehearsal schedule for its six dancers to three days a week. Unlike many other companies, EDE pays its dancers for rehearsal and performance.

And of course, the dancers are also teachers in a variety of classes taught at EDE. "We try to give the kids a well-rounded education," said Eisenhower.

"It's so important for them to explore space and movement and to feel good about their bodies. It's all part of building a positive self-image."

And to think some people just call it dancing.

Frank Provenzano is an arts reporter for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. You can reach him at (248) 901-2557, or write to him at the Birmingham, Eccentric Newspaper, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, 48009.

## ART BEAT

### REMOTE-CONTROL ART

Swiss artist Roman Signer will perform a unique art event using remote-control helicopter, tablecloths and spray paint at Cranbrook Art Museum.

The event will open Signer's exhibit, "The Sound of One Bomb Clapping: Sculpture, Actions and Drawings by Roman Signer" at the Cranbrook Arts Museum.

Visitors will be instructed to go to as-yet-to-be-revealed location to view Signer's live art performance.

The art-in-action event will begin 6 p.m. Friday, Sept. 12 at Cranbrook Art Museum, 1221 N. Woodward, Bloomfield Hills.

### PONTIAC STUDIO TOUR

After last year's overwhelming response, artists and galleries in downtown Pontiac will hold the second annual tour beginning at 6 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 20.

The self-guided tour presents visitors with an inside-look at the creative sanctuaries of many of the area's most talented artists.

The fledgling artist community has distinguished itself as a vibrant village of creative people finding their unique expression in painting, drawing and sculpture. Maps, shuttle bus stops and information for the free tour will be available on the day of the event at 7 N. Saginaw, 40 W. Howard, 120 E. Widetrek (St. Fredrick's School). Free parking is available.