

## CONVERSATIONS



FRANK PROVENZANO

### Remembering the people behind the stories

The weekly deadline to write this column seems to come around nearly every day. Making deadline has never come easily.

But this week - finally - I know clearly and unequivocally what I'd like to say.

Simply, "Thanks."

During the past year, I've met people inspired by art and a desire to express themselves. Honest, interesting and determined people who opened their lives to share their feelings, struggles and dreams. Deadline pressure might have made it difficult to find the right words, but many of you made it easy for me to find my place.

The following is an incomplete list of people who made 1997 a wonderful journey. Their contributions can hardly be quantified.

Perhaps their collective contributions can best be measured by the optimism, faith and growing interest in the arts throughout Oakland County.

#### Honest appraisals

Greg Whittkopp, David D.J. Rau and Irene Hoffman for their humor, energy and creative zeal in expanding the curatorial vision of the Cranbrook Art Museum.

Samuel Sachs II for his candor in discussing his reasons for leaving the Detroit Institute of Arts, and the cordiality and composure of interim director Maurice Parrish.

Susanne Hilberry of the Hilberry Gallery in Birmingham for her guttiness, and willingness to not only speak her mind but to challenge the local art scene whenever it grows static.

Elizabeth Stone of Birmingham for transforming her art gallery, which displays the works of children's book illustrators, into an exhibit space for Bloomfield Hills students.

Artist Jennifer Reeves, formerly of Birmingham, and represented by the Lemberg Gallery, for her emotionally wrought landscapes of her relentless search for self discovery.

Arlene Frank, who works Oakland Community College's Women Center, for coordinating an annual art exhibit by women artists to celebrate diversity, not ideology.

Nancy Thayer of Lathrup Village whose mystical abstract paintings reflect the many dimensions of her warmth and humanity.

Susan Kell of Rochester Hills for translating a trip to the homeland of her grandmother into paintings of figs and pomegranates. Kell revealed a universal story about the need to understand history in order to comprehend the present.

Marianne Hall of Birmingham, a talented printmaker, who shunned the "stigma" that a fine artist wouldn't be in an art fair by participating in the Ann Arbor Art Fair.

Sylvia Nelson, director of the Janice Charnock Epstein Museum Gallery, for a gallery exhibit, "The Jew As Other: A Century of English Caricature, 1730-1830."

#### Determined and resourceful

Russian-born artist Felix Braslavsky of Farmington who didn't give in to Soviet censorship, immigrated to the US, and began his career in the United States despite being in his late 60s.

Al Skoropa, businessman-turned-promoter, who put together the finest talent lineup in the history of the Birmingham Jazz Festival.

Tunji and Ian Grant of Umoja Fine Arts in Southfield for their exuberance in becoming the largest distributor of African-American posters and prints in the Midwest.

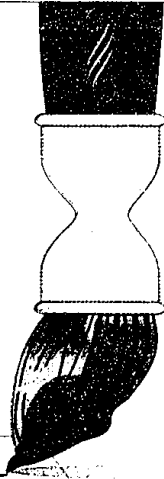
The Lyric Chamber Ensemble and the Detroit Chamber Winds for seeking ways to broaden the appeal of classical music while not compromising the integrity or quality of the music.

Karen Nixon-Lane, founder of the Farmington Area Philharmonic, whose never-say-die attitude is broadening the accessibility of classical

# Artists draw on future

Creative leaders resolved, wishful, determined

BY FRANK PROVENZANO • STAFF WRITER



TAMARA CHAYES/STAFF ARTIST

The annual rite of making New Year's Resolutions is upon us.

Raise a glass to the impeccable timing of the eternal calendar makers, those Dionysian comics who've combined year-end festive cheer with a dash of guilt.

After binging on food, sweets, family and football for the last week - and the biggest celebration ahead - we'll soon enter the push and pull post-holiday season. Also known as the rest of our lives.

Get a notepad to consider a few resolutions of your own. It's a good way to jump-start those slumbering brain cells.

Follow along as members of the local arts community cogitate on their prospective course for 1998.

Some have made resolutions, and of course, some have assembled a wish list. But then, this is the arts, a world where having a dream is not idle reflection, but a prerequisite.

#### Building the arts community

"My resolution for the DIA is to build a stronger financial base for the museum and to expand the opportunities for people to experience art."

- Maurice D. Parrish, interim director  
Detroit Institute of Arts

"To continue building on the popularity of opera among a young audience; to pay off the Detroit Opera House mortgage well in advance; and, to remain healthy so that I can meet the challenges that lie ahead."

- David DiChiera, general director  
Michigan Opera Theatre

"I'm resolved to get the message out that Meadow Brook is here and the artistic standard is rising; to increase the audience by 4,000; and, to make a lot of noise."

- Geoffrey Sherman, artistic director  
Meadow Brook Theatre, Rochester Hills

"We're resolved to find a generous soul who'll donate the funds (\$2 million) to complete Phase III and Phase IV of the BBA's building project."

- Janet Torno, executive director  
Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association

"Our hope for 1998 is that the arts will find a place in every home in our community and every person is reached by the FCAC and its programs."

- Jennifer Tobin, executive director  
Plymouth Community Arts Council

"To bring more activities to make this the center of arts in the area; to introduce new programs in theater, dance and ethnic classes; to get more exposure so people known were here."

- Helen Gale, programmer  
Southfield Centre of the Arts

"To continue to increase the interest in the arts by spreading the word through information (via a newsletter and cable), good publicity and leadership."

- Bob Sheridan, chair  
Livonia Arts Commission

"To help foster a feeling in the community that celebrates the spirit that's central to the arts."

- Maury Ohun, executive director  
Detroit Chamber Winds, based in Troy

"To create full houses. Of course, the \$84,000 question is how to do it. On a personal level, I'm resolved to begin playing piano again."

- Bob Bennett, president  
Livonia Symphony Orchestra

#### Proverbial search

"To find a visionary with deep pockets who can help us double the size of the museum."

- Gregory Whittkopp, director  
Cranbrook Art Museum

"To expand the funding base and explore more partnerships; and, to take time to enjoy the arts as we're administering them."

- Betty Rudeselli, executive director  
Point Creek Center for the Arts, Rochester

"To encourage the acceptance of the public sculptures (around Livonia); to enhance any of our existing city (arts) facilities."

- Lee Alankas, vice chair  
Livonia Arts Commission

"To reach into the schools more meaningfully; increase the size of our audience and develop a broader base of support."

- Russell Reed, music director  
Plymouth Symphony Orchestra

"To show the kind of art that is open and expressive and will invite viewers to get in touch with their own feelings and to come away with new ideas."

- Alan Cary, Director  
Cary Gallery, Rochester

"To educate our customers about Native American art and artists; to encourage people to seek out art by visiting a museum or gallery."

- Annette Horn, owner  
Native West, an art gallery in Plymouth

"To continue to bring extraordinary cultural events to our community enriching the human soul and spirit through music."

- Ginka Gervova-Ortega of Bloomfield Hills  
artistic director, Musica Viva  
International Concerts

#### Smell the roses

"To be more organized and to work more efficiently. I always say I want to work harder, but then I always say 'Don't work so hard and smell the roses.'"

- Laurie Eisenhower, director  
Eisenhower Dance Ensemble, Rochester Hills

"Eat more healthy food; attend more movies at the DIA with my new husband; stop nagging my 29-year-old brother to clean his apartment."

- Laurie Landers Goldman of Birmingham  
violinist, Detroit Symphony Orchestra

"To focus more on my own work; to work less on boards and community activities. I'd like to complete 20 new works next year."

- Sergio DeGiusti, sculptor  
Redford resident

"To find ways to revive spirituality in my work, and to get back to the basic relationships of why an audience is moved."

- Geoffrey Sherman, artistic director  
Meadow Brook Theatre

"To be instrumental in creating an awareness of the value of art in our society and in each individual's life."

- Janet Torno, executive director  
Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association

"To promote what the late Walter Buhl Ford II said, 'Art in all its forms and manifestations of expression is the soul of living.'"

- Alan Cary, director  
Cary Gallery, Rochester

#### Lift your resolution

And lastly, Ginka Gervova-Ortega, artistic director of Musica Viva, perhaps best articulated the spirit of those who seek artistic expression as a way to understand themselves and appreciate the vast differences among the people of the world.

"Live your dream and god-given talent to the fullest," said the renowned Spanish-born flutist. "Radiate love. Believe in the miracle of goodness."

Take a moment. Raise a glass. Lift your resolution. And believe.

## EXHIBITION

### Painter highlights city, village life

Littorio Del Signore

What: An exhibition of approximately 30 oil paintings by the artist born in Italy and now living in Montreal.  
Where: Park West Gallery, 29408 Northwestern Highway, (between 12 and 13 Mile Roads) in Park West Plaza, Southfield. To R.S.V.P. for receptions with artist or for more information, call (800) 521-0324.  
When: Friday-Sunday, Jan. 16-18, with receptions to meet the artist 7-9 p.m. Fri. day, and 2-4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.  
Regular gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Wednesday, until 9 p.m. Thursday, Friday, and 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday-Sunday.

BY LINDA ANN CHROMI  
STAFF WRITER

Littorio Del Signore has been painting since he was 6 years old. "I have the need inside to express myself in painting," said Del Signore, who was visiting his cousin John Del Signore and with Lina at their restaurant Fonte d'Amore on Dec. 18 to check last minute details for his one-man exhibition Jan. 16-18 at Park West Gallery in Southfield. "I point what I think in my heart and my mind; it's very romantic."

Created in post-Impressionist style, the 30 oil paintings distinguish the 69-year-old Montreal resident as an artist of the people as Del Signore portrays men, women and children engaged in everyday activities. Each city, village and market scene is bathed in golden morning light, or sunset rose.

Lina translated for Littorio Del Signore who speaks Italian and French but little English as they met with Park West Gallery president

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Impressionistic light: Littorio Del Signore, an artist of the people, creates everyday scenes such as this painting titled "The Beach."