

'Having Our Say' is heartwarming

"Having Our Say" by Emily Mann continues through Sunday, Jan. 31 at Meadow Brook Theatre in Wilson Hall on the campus of Oakland University, Rochester Hills. Performances Tuesday-Sunday, call for times. This week's show times, 2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 10; 8 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, Jan. 12-16; 2 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 13 and Saturday, Jan. 16. Special performances ASL-Interpreted, 8 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 19 and Audio Described, 8 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 20. Tickets \$24 to \$35, available at Ticketmaster locations (248) 645-6666, or call the theater (248) 377-3300.

By KELLY WYONK
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If you live to be more than 100, you'll probably have a thing or two to say about your life, and chances are pretty good people will want to listen. That's what happened to Sadie and Bessie Delany, two sisters whose life story, "Having Our Say," was the subject of a 1993 best-selling novel written with Amy Hill Hearth and adapted for stage by Emily Mann. Now playing at Meadow Brook Theatre, "Having Our Say," is "a slice of history, an African American story," said Audrey Morgan who portrays Bessie. Sylvia Carter is Sadie. In the play, Sadie is 103, and Bessie 101. Bessie died in 1995, Sadie is still alive. The sisters welcome a visitor, as they prepare dinner to honor their father's memory. While

working in the kitchen, and visiting in the living room, the sisters share their lives with the audience. Back then you could choose to get married or have a career. Both sisters chose careers. Sadie received her bachelor's and master's degrees from Columbia University, and became the first black woman to teach domestic science in the New York City school system. Bessie, also graduated from Columbia, and became the second African American dentist licensed to practice in New York. "I like doing the play," said Morgan. "We speak directly to the audience. The sisters are constantly doing something. It's two hours of non-stop talking." As sisters tell their story they take the audience back in time explaining what it was like to experience prejudice and segregation. Their father was a slave. Bessie and Sadie talk about the death of Jim Crow, living in Harlem in the 1920s, the Great Depression, and the civil rights movement. There are also heartwarming stories about their close family, and the values they learned from their parents - hard work, your money, praise god, get an education, help and forgive others. "It's something that every race should experience," said Morgan. "Every one is a part of Sadie's and Bessie's history. This is an opportunity to heal." The Delany sisters were highly educated and very respected in the community. It's a piece of African American family history that many people aren't familiar with.



MEADOW BROOK THEATRE

After meeting the Delany sisters Morgan said she hopes people will begin to care about the family, and take a different look at how they view African Americans. "Racism still exists, it's the core of this country," she said. Bessie is outspoken, Sadie, her older sister, is quiet, and plays dumb to get what she wants. "I love the story so," said Carter. "I love the women, they're so interesting, they complement each other so well. It's a story worth telling. It's important that people hear it, especially young African Americans. They get all caught up in believing I can't do this because I'm black, instead of realizing yes, this is an issue, but there's a

Sisters:
Audrey Morgan (left) and Sylvia Carter perform as the Delany sisters in "Having Our Say."

ART BEAT

Send items for consideration in Art Beat to Frank Provenzano, (248) 901-2557. Or write to him at the Birmingham Eccentric! Newspaper, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, 48009. Frank covers arts for communities in the Eccentric! coverage area.

BBAC RECEIVES GRANTS

The Birmingham Bloomfield Art Center recently was awarded three grants totaling \$9,000.

For the third consecutive year, the Fanclub Foundation for the Arts provided funds to support the BBAC's Summer Youth Arts Camps. This year, the Fanclub provided a \$3,000 grant to the BBAC.

The BBAC's garden will be further expanded in part to a grant of \$3,000 by the Japan Business Society of Detroit Foundation.

And the BBAC has earmarked the \$1,000 grant from Hudson's to go to the Pontiac Children's Outreach Art Project.

The program offers Pontiac middle school students weekly studio art classes taught by BBAC faculty members.

NEW DIRECTOR AT UZZELAC GALLERY

Lisa Konikow has been named director at the Pontiac-based Uzzelac Gallery.

Konikow, who coordinated the fine art exhibits at last year's "Arts, Bessie & Sadie," is a long-time curator in the area.

The gallery is located at 7 N. Saginaw in downtown Pontiac.

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ArtServe is a statewide non-profit organization supporting Michigan artists and culture.

MEADOW BROOK ART GALLERY CAPTURES HISTORIC PARIS

The history, mystery and beauty of Paris are on display at the recently opened exhibit, "Picturing Paris: 1850 to the Present," at the Meadow Brook Gallery.

The exhibit draws upon the Detroit Institute of Arts permanent collection.

The 50 photographs illustrate street scenes, cafes, nightlife, historic monuments, expansive vistas and the people of Paris at work and at leisure.

Before arriving at Meadow Brook, "Picturing Paris" was on view at the Ennos Museum Center in Traverse City.

The exhibit will run through Feb. 21. It will then travel to Midland and Marquette.

Gallery hours: 1-5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday; 2-6:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

For information, (248) 370-3005.

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dle, black plastic like a punctured fabric, and the dark plane with dots of light, like an August night sky illuminated by constellations. The shapes are inspired by objects Knodel collected in a lifetime of traveling the world. "Most of these objects are kept on a library shelf," he said. "I wondered if anyone would see the relationship among them." In unfolding panels, Knodel has constructed a personal mythology with accents seemingly borrowed from Islamic culture. Most notably, Knodel repeats forms, but also suggests that the pattern extends beyond the work. A motif that respects the notion of infinity that is prevalent among Islamic art. "At the opening, people thought they were in the wrong

■ 'I've been exploring what are the qualities that can build mystery back into the physical world.'

Gerhardt Knodel
fiber artist

exhibit," said Linda Ross, curator at Sybaris. "We've done as much explaining about Gerhardt's latest work as we have about any exhibit we've had." Perhaps that's because Knodel can hardly be accused of being bound by conventional means. Knodel's art doesn't merely exist in material, pattern and form. Rather, it's foremost an idea, layered with craftsmanship and refinement. "Skywalking" demonstrates what many have witnessed in Knodel's large-scale installations at the Northville Public Library,

William Beaumont Hospital, and American Center. Knodel's work creates an accessible, serene environment. In some ways, the perforated panels of polycarbonate appear as a miniature version of a Japanese screen. "We don't think about cloth as an expressive element, but it is," said Knodel. "These (new) works are meant as a reminder of the tradition of embellishment." Using a polymer that evokes feelings of impersonality, Knodel has infused the material with a sense of intimacy.

"People are growing suspicious of the physical world," he said. "I've been exploring what are the qualities that can build mystery back into the physical world." Building a sense of mystery is hardly an easy task. But what greater challenge do artists face other than to evoke a sense of wonderment from their audiences? Since the early 1970s - when he began his tenure as head of Cranbrook's fiber department - Knodel has inspired the curiosity of generations of students. Meanwhile, his own work has been distinguished by a proper balance of humility, humanity and curiosity. Of course, there's a word to describe Knodel's lasting influence as a teacher and an artist. But for now, why bother with semantics.

whom grow up in Farmington Hills and attended the University of Michigan. "Our vision is to help bring about a downtown that's a place for people to live, meet other people, walk around to galleries, restaurants, concerts." What can a thriving downtown do for a metropolis? Poris quickly points to Chicago. Since 1990, more than 300,000 people have moved to downtown Chicago, attracted by a bustling cultural and retail scene. To their credit, Poris and McIntosh practice what they preach. Both came back to metro Detroit after establishing an impressive career working on commercial, retail, institutional and residential projects at several of the leading architecture firms in the country. "We came back home because there were opportunities here to do our own work," said Poris.

If ever a time For the last several years, McIntosh and Poris have served as a pro bono counsel to the city of Detroit to help come up with alternatives for tearing down historic buildings. McIntosh, who also drafted preliminary plans for the Detroit Detroit Casino and World Trade Center in Detroit, serves on the board of Preservation Wayne. Meanwhile, Poris concedes that the dialogue is only beginning about the 21st-century culture in metro Detroit. "It's a long process," he said. "Great cities aren't built overnight. We're going through a time of education." Just like an idealistic architect to see potential amid an ambiguous landscape. Then again, all it takes is a dream, a few dreamers and that great intangible - timing.

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Superstar

from page C1

the upper echelon of sopranos," said Billman. "She has an amazing sweet, but a big voice." With uncanny interpretative ability that allows her to shape the musical text, critics claim Fleming can wring subtle emotion or reach the highest aural level of emotional impact.

Song recitals

Until the mid 1990s, UMS typically only had one song recital during its season. But recently, local audiences have responded to UMS' presentation of up-and-coming and established singers in diverse musical programs. This season, UMS is presenting three other song recitals in addition to Fleming's concert. Those concerts in late January, March and April will be performed at the 650-seat Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre on the University of Michigan campus in Ann Arbor.

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