

CONVERSATIONS



FRANK PROVENZANO

Classic gutsy decision leads to glory at WYUR

Being in the radio business in the metro Detroit market is a lot like dodging bullets for a living. Sudden format changes. One broadcasting company gobbling up another. The frantic competition for ratings. It'll either keep you young or age you prematurely.

In recent years, the continual buy-outs, mergers, takeovers of staff and on-air personalities who sound remarkably alike has left little room for longevity.

Bob Hynes and Joe Martelle, a couple of old-time radio vets, are firing back.

And they've done so in the simplest of ways — by adding a classical music show to their radio program lineup at WYUR-AM (1310).

If you're wondering about the degree that commercialism has invaded our culture, just realize that over the last 18 months in the sixth largest radio market in the country, there wasn't a radio station dedicated to the classical music format. Until now.

Feisty realists

Actually, if it wasn't for their long resumes and the thinning crop of hair atop Hynes' cap and Martelle's gray mane, there would be few other signs that the two are closer to the age of



Back on air: Dick Wallace heads up a line up of former WYUR personalities on WYUR-AM.

What: "Classical Music Dusk 'Til Dawn," 5 p.m.-7 p.m. daily, WYUR-AM (1310). Features: Monday-Friday, hosted by Dick Wallace; Saturday, hosted by Pat McElroy; and Sunday, "Sunday Evening Pop Concert," hosted by Dave Wagner. For information, (248) 433-9987.

retirement, rather than at a stage where you start a new venture.

Hynes and Martelle have been around the radio dial for four decades. Both worked at WYUR-AM, and Martelle was the right-hand assistant to

Allan Frank, general manager at WDIV-TV (Channel 4).

A year-and-a-half ago, they began leasing the WYUR frequency from Chancellor Broadcasting.

It hasn't been easy. The "information and personalities" format includes familiar on-air names like Jimmy Jamme, Jim Davis and Hynes, who anchors the morning drive-time slot.

Despite the familiar personalities, there's no denying an independently operated station in today's radio market is in a David versus Goliath struggle.

Martelle isn't reluctant to pull out the sling shot and take aim. "All our decisions are made in this room," said Martelle, gesturing to the four walls in Hynes' office.

Hynes agrees. "We don't have to wait to hear from some corporate office in another city."

The old vets can be feisty.

Happy at the Alamo

While Hynes and Martelle readily admit they're in business to make

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Everyman's Artist

JOSEPH WESNER CREATES SCULPTURES WHEREBY THE LITERAL MEETS THE ABSTRACT

BY FRANK PROVENZANO STAFF WRITER provenzano@ec.homecomm.net

An old, blue pickup drives up, and out from the cab steps Joseph Wesner, looking as if he's on his way to the gym or perhaps meeting the guys for a few drinks.

There's no gym or bar in sight. The pickup is parked alongside the Hill Gallery near a blighted residential area of Birmingham, where Wesner's most recent sculptures along with New York painter Glenn Goldberg's recent works are on exhibit through May 8.

Wesner, 43, arrives to talk about art, middle age, the cosmos and a range of other topics — from his travels to China to growing up in a rough-and-tumble neighborhood in Philadelphia.

Appearing on the fit, bohemian easerman from his Georgetown college days of 26 years ago, Wesner of Birmingham often runs his fingers through his shoulder-length brown hair and scratches at a jaw of stubble.

In contemplating his work, Wesner concedes there are no easy or brief descriptions.

The student who grew up admiring the works of Rodin, Brancusi and Duchamp — and who graduated from Cranbrook Art Academy — has translated his charming personal defiance into sculptures whereby a hint of the literal world mingles with layers of abstract connotations.

"I'm trying to move back and forth from the identifiable image to the abstract," he said. "It's a parallel to the cognition process. Ideas come from the fog, take shape and there's understanding."

Heavy thinking, however, isn't a prerequisite to appreciate Wesner's work. "Visual art starts with the word 'visual,'" he said.

"People don't have to jump over the moon to figure out if they like it."

Indeed, on its own visual and technical merits, Wesner's sculptures are strong, engaging forms that require — and, at times — demand the viewer's attention. Nothing is quite what it appears to be. The literal forms aren't easily deciphered.

For the probing mind, there are layers of subtle symbolism.

Under hat

In three series of sculptures as part of the larger exhibit, Wesner, in essence, sets forth his philosophy of life without appearing overtly preachy.

"This is all part of my own maturing process," said Wesner, referring to the three distinct series of sculptures tied together by what he calls a metaphor for the cognitive process — various styles of hats cast in bronze, iron

and aluminum.

In Wesner's hands, the casts of Asian cone-like hats, Mexican sombreros and knit stocking caps are a case of the "personal made universal." The hats are covered by a waxy material, dipped into a solution until they become encased in a hard ceramic shell. Eventually the hat itself is burned away. What remains are vestiges of the hat.

These "hats," for Wesner, represent a receptacle for history, personal memories, and a personal consciousness in search of broader understanding of life and the cosmos.

For instance, the sculptures with a slight resemblance of a cone-like hat illustrate the nature of how ideas dissolve, emerge and the artist's continual pursuit for perspective.

Meanwhile, in the triptych, "Three Sisters," Wesner combines pieces of a sombrero with the metaphor based on Columbus' ships into a personal interpretation of the role of the three women in his life.

And, in the three stocking caps series, "The Development of Thought," Wesner makes an obvious reference to the "hat" worn by children in their formative years.

Hat and mind. Idea and form. Wesner seems to find the ideal fit.

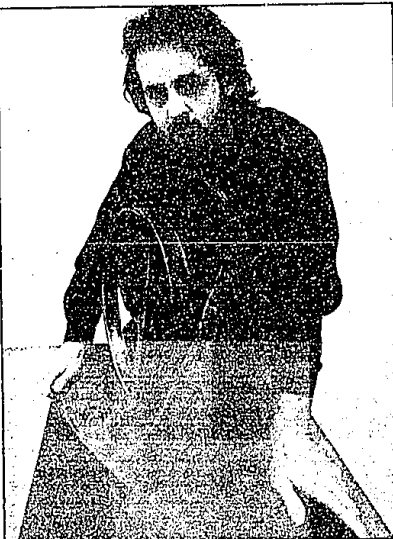
Gritty Philly

Wesner clutches a cup of coffee while pacing the hardwood floors in the immaculate and brightly lit Hill Gallery.

Gritty Philly sensibilities meet artistic refinement. "What's important is the empathy in the work," he said.

In an art world filled with self-centered artists seeking celebrity status, Wesner's intention shouldn't be overlooked. Like his current sculptures, Wesner isn't easily categorized.

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STAFF PHOTO BY JERRY ZOLINSKY

Searching for perspective: Sculptor Joseph Wesner with "Galileo's Eco," a bronze sculpture inspired by the 16th-century astronomer who proved that man wasn't necessarily the center of the universe.

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Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra

Orchestra devotes year to Ellington

BY HUGH GALLAGHER STAFF WRITER hgallagher@ec.homecomm.net

Detroit bass player Rodney Whitaker is a passionate musician with an equal passion for the history of his art.

The two interests are neatly dovetailing with his participation as a member of the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, which is devoting this entire year to a celebration of Duke Ellington's centennial.

Edward Kennedy Ellington was born April 29, 1899, in Washington, D.C., and went on to become the most prolific, and many would argue, the most creative composer of the 20th century.

The LCO under the direction of Wynton Marsalis brings its Ellington celebration, "America in Rhythm & Tune" to Ann Arbor's Hill Auditorium Friday, April 23, part of a 36-city tour.

"I grew up thinking of Ellington's Orchestra as a dance band. The band had all these hits, 'Take the A Train' and 'Satin Doll,' there were so many," Whitaker said. "But he expanded the tradition of jazz to concert music."

Ellington was a musician, band leader and composer. He won initial fame for his songs but soon moved into virtually every form of musical composition including musical theater, suites, movie scores and sacred music.

"I think, for example, of such pieces as 'The Tattooed Bride' or 'Harlem,' which we're performing, they transcended musical styles," Whitaker said.

"So many things are happening in that piece. There is the European aesthetic but also the Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean aesthetics. The idea of his music is American."

I know Wynton says that all the time, but it's true. It is American, it takes from so many things. America is the melting pot."

As a band leader Ellington created an orchestra that brought new sophistication to popular music. He surrounded himself with gifted musicians for whom he wrote music specific to their talents. The roster of Ellington musicians is long and distinguished — Bubba Miley, Harry Carney, Cootie Williams, Johnny Hodges, Paul Gonsalves, Ray Name. Oscar Pettiford and many more.

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DANCE

Eisenhower Dance Ensemble heading to NYC stage after local performances

BY FRANK PROVENZANO STAFF WRITER provenzano@ec.homecomm.net

Before an idea or piece of music is translated into a formalized dance, choreographer Laurie Eisenhower claims that she first must see the movements in her mind.

These days, the most intriguing movements dancing through Eisenhower's mind might be the path that leads her dance company to their New York debut in mid June.

But before an Eisenhower Dance Ensemble performance is scrutinized by New York critics at the Big Apple's Dance Theater Workshop, they will perform for local audiences this Friday at the Macomb Center for the Arts

and at Waterford Mott High School in mid May.

"We're at a level where the virtuosity is quite strong," said Eisenhower of Rochester Hills, who teaches dance at Oakland University and at the nearby Eisenhower Dance Studio.

"Every year we've grown," she said. "It's a while for a company to jell. Now we're getting beyond the Midwest."

Last fall, EDE traveled to Washington, D.C., and Virginia for performances at The Dance Place and James Madison University, respectively.

A critically acclaimed performance in New York, according to Eisenhower, could lead the seven-member troupe even further past the Midwest.

"Positive reviews in *The New York Times*, *Village Voice* and *Dance* magazine could really help with bookings just about anywhere," she said.

Action-packed schedule

The upcoming concert at the Macomb Center, "Packed-Action," is an appropriate title considering EDE's hectic schedule of performances and a dance workshop in the Waterford school system over the next two months.

"Packed-Action" features six dances, including pieces by guest choreographer Colin Conner, a former dance teacher at Juilliard School of Performing Arts, and Lila York, a former dancer with the prestigious Paul Taylor Company.

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Travellin': Ann Bak is among the Eisenhower Dance Ensemble dancers preparing for a hectic two-months of performances, workshops and travel.