

CONVERSATIONS



FRANK PROVENZANO

Translating the language of dance

November is a sneaky month. But it never catches Barbara Selinger off guard or out of breath. A dancer finds ways to remain limber.

On a bone-chilling November morning, when most of us take a couple extra shots of espresso to forget about chronic back pain, Selinger stands in front of a mirror in her downtown Detroit dance studio.

Forget the caffeine. File away the excuses. Drop the thesaurus. Selinger of Farmington Hills is looking for a new language. A vernacular of gestures.

She'll readily admit that she's been dancing since she was 3. She won't as readily admit that when she was 3 Truman was prez, and Elvis had yet to shake his pelvis.

While some dancers might have long ago been convinced of gravity and time's immutable laws, Selinger rolls on her tights and perspires.

Set the coffee aside. Slare into the mirror. And stretch.

On the edge
This weekend, Detroit Dance Collective will perform choreography by Selinger and co-founder Paula Kramer. Like a series of evocative metaphors, the new dances are entitled "Life Forms," "Dancing On A Line In Time," and "Unknown Sequence."

Originally created for video, Selinger has re-choreographed "Life Forms" for the stage. And like many other of her signature dances, her latest steps draw on various art forms, including poetry and Gaelic music.

"Paula and I came from traditional background," said Selinger. "We try to be on the edge, but still maintain the tradition. Ultimately, good choreography is good regardless of the style."

Selinger calls her latest dance a blend of the physical and metaphysical, the real and surreal.

"I'm just kind of curious," she said. "But I'm not good with words."

Naturally, her verse is translated to body language.

Please see CONVERSATIONS, C2



Blast from the past: A 15-foot Tyrannosaurus rex skeleton greets visitors at the newly installed permanent exhibits area in the expanded museum.



Opening up: Elaine Gurian, acting director of Cranbrook Institute of Science, and Michael Stafford, head of Cranbrook's science division, stand in front of a life-size Mastodon.

A NATURAL EVOLUTION

Cranbrook Institute of Science unveils new vision, 21st-century interactive museum

BY FRANK PROVENZANO • STAFF WRITER

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What: Five new permanent exhibits, entitled "Our Dynamic Earth," "Where Cranbrook Institute of Science, 1223 N. Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Hills

Admission: \$7, adults; \$4, children/seniors. Hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., daily. (248) 645-3200

Highlights: ■ **Life Changes Over Time**—The evolutionary relationship between dinosaurs and birds, featuring a 15-foot-tall Tyrannosaurus rex life-size skeleton.

■ **Connections Theater**—State-of-the-art theater in the round with three projections related to featured exhibits on screens.

■ **Ice Ages Come and Go**—The geological transformation of the region from the Ice Age, featuring an animated video on how Michigan came to be shaped like a mitten.

■ **Mastodons Did Not Survive**—Learn why the Mastodons became extinct, and what their loss from the planet teaches about the current ecology.

■ **Water Is Like Nothing Else**—A microscopic and everyday investigation of water, from molecular structure to determining the amount of water in your body.

When Robert Gavin assumed the post of president of Cranbrook last September, it was generally agreed that it'd take about a year before his vision for the prestigious educational community would become clear.

While Cranbrook supporters may suggest that after 14 months in the post Gavin shouldn't be bound by an arbitrary deadline, the impatient public at-large has a different response: "Time's up."

In the past year—unlike few other times in its 71-year history—Cranbrook has laid claim as a destination point, not just for students and benefactors, but for the general public starved for cultural experiences.

This weekend's opening of the five newly installed permanent, interactive exhibits at the Cranbrook Institute of Science is a decisive statement about the new direction of a place that conjures notions of wealth, privilege, and—considering the formerly stodgy natural history exhibits—archeological mystique.

After much consideration, physical reconstruction and an investment of millions of dollars, those timeworn perceptions have been transformed.

Visual freshness

While those old 1950s-style permanent exhibits are being revamped in the older part of the museum, the new exhibits offer a 21st-century sensibility and an entertaining appeal, including a 15-foot T. Rex, a life-

size Mastodon, and a futuristic theater that presents a fascinating 3D overview of the exhibits.

But this isn't a case of MTV meets Darwin. Nor is it a hybrid of Disney and the Discovery Channel.

This is science education in the age of interactivity and information overload. The challenge, of course, is to relate basic scientific principles to day-to-day experiences.

For Michael Stafford, head of Cranbrook's science division, the new exhibits is a case of modern-day time travel.

"How can you bring people to the distant past without literally taking them there?" said Stafford.

"When we look around, we believe we've brought them there."

The Institute of Science has expanded by more than 50 percent to 95,000 square feet in a sleek, engaging \$27-million annex designed by renowned architect Steven Hall.

With a gritty contemporary aesthetic and an interactive playfulness, the newest exhibits feature what is commonly referred to as The Cranbrook Factor—the engaging blend of scientific principles with artfully designed presentations by a group of Cranbrook artists.

"We approached the exhibits with a visual freshness," said Elaine Gurian, acting director of the Institute of Science.

That's not an easy task, especially in a world of museums where exhibits have a

Please see MUSEUM, C2

Create your own film festival

BY HUGH GALLAGHER
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Elliot Wilhelm says his new "Videohound's World Cinema: The Adventurer's Guide to Movie Watching" is designed so that readers can create their film festival.

Wilhelm, director of the Detroit Film Theater Series at the Detroit Institute of Arts, has brought his passion for movies to a lively, opinionated and entertaining guide to 800 foreign films. The guide, priced at \$19.95, is the latest in a series of successful Videohound and MusicHound guides from Farmington Hills publisher Visible Ink, an imprint of The Gale Group.

Visible Ink publisher Martin Connors approached Wilhelm two years ago about doing a guide based on Wilhelm's experience of bringing exciting foreign and independent films to Detroit for the past 25 years.

The guide features a capsule review of the films, vital statistics, recommendations for similar films viewers might like and information on how to rent videos that might not be readily available at your local video store.

The book is well organized and includes several indexes for cross-referencing. In addition to the capsule reviews, Wilhelm includes short personality profiles on such prominent figures as Japanese actor Toshio Mifune, Chinese actress Gong Li and French director Louis Malle and the legendary Luis Bunuel.

What the book does not have is a rating system.

"It's something I've never been fond of, though Videohound has used a rating system in its other books," Wilhelm said. "What we found with my book, through the process of whittling down from thousands of titles, was that films I was selecting were mostly films I really liked. The vast majority would have a really high rating and it would be redundant and superfluous to have them rated. One of my problems with rat-



ings is that it's not as simple as liking or disliking and we hope people would explore."

Wilhelm does make his likes and dislikes perfectly clear. He bluntly dismisses films that he finds offensive, exploitative or trite and sentimental. But the majority of films are braced with the insight of an admirer and the knowledge of a film historian.

Please see CINEMA, C2

CLASSICAL MUSIC

String Quartet's environment beyond the classics

BY FRANK PROVENZANO
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The Muir String Quartet has not only built a sterling worldwide reputation for their sensitive intonations of the Beethoven quartets, but they've developed their own interpretation of how to attract crossover audiences.

The quartet, which includes three members of the Boston Symphony, will perform this Saturday at Orchestra Hall.

The concert features the quartet along with pianist Randall Hodgkinson in Schubert's famous Piano Quintet in A major, commonly referred to as the "Trout Quartet."

"They're not only all accomplished performers, but they're committed to educating their audiences," said Lois Beznos, president of the Chamber Music Society, which opened its 55th season in October with the Juilliard String Quartet.

What: The Chamber Music Society of Detroit presents The Muir String Quartet, joined by pianist Randall Hodgkinson and string bassist Edwin Barker.

When: 8 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 14, with a pre-concert forum, "The Changing Process of Recording Chamber Music CDs," at 6:45 p.m.

Where: Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit

Tickets: \$15-\$40; (313) 570-5111, or (248) 737-9890

Program: Mozart's Piano Quartet in G minor, K. 478; Dvorak's String Quintet in G major, opus 77; and Schubert's Piano Quintet in A major, D. 567.

Highlights: ■ Preview lecture by music historian John Guina—3 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 8, Bloomfield Township Library, 1099 Lone Pine Road (at Maple Road), Bloomfield Hills

The "education" takes on two distinct forms—pre-concert talks about chamber music and the Muir String Quartet's rather subtle activist campaign to build environmental awareness.

While pop stars such as Sting have used their celebrity status to point public attention to the plight of the Rain Forest, the Muir String Quartet builds environmental awareness one concert audience at a time.

From pop to jazz to classical, the bottom-line driven recording industry continues to search for those evasive crossover artists to maximize audience "sales appeal."

Perhaps the most recent storied crossover appeal was the Three Tenors world-wide success in bringing arias and operatic phrasing to the mainstream.

But perhaps one of the most ambitious pollination undertakings in the classical music world is the Muir String Quartet's

Please see MUSIC, C2



Timeless: Dancer Barbara Selinger's choreography and teaching has inspired audiences and many dancers.



Musical conservationists: The world-renowned Muir String Quartet has been praised by critics for its "impeccable voicing and intonation." The group donates net proceeds from CD sales to environmental causes.