

ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS



LINDA ANN CHOMIN

Program showcases American opera

Kimberly Swan's enthusiasm for opera increases as she speaks about the Italian tradition. Swan, along with tenor Jack Morris and baritone Dino Vaillo of the Verdi Opera Theatre of Michigan, will sing highlights from favorite Italian operas Sunday, Feb. 27, at Summit on the Park. Sponsored by Canton Project Arts, the "Opera Encore" program surveys the realm of the art from its history to the music.



Kimberly Swan

"Opera Encore"

What: Canton Project Arts program features a side presentation about the history of opera in America, and performance by the Verdi Opera Theatre of Michigan.

When: 3 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 27. Reception follows the concert.

Where: Summit on the Park, 46000 Summit Parkway, Canton.

Tickets: \$15, call (734) 357-6450 for reservations.

Arts at Ward Presbyterian Church in Livonia and in her private studio.

"Italian opera is very passionate," said Swan. "Verdi is probably the most prominent composer. He wrote for the voice. When I sing it, it's like magic." Verdi Opera Theatre president John Zaretti designed the program and slide presentation, "Opera in America: Stories, People, Places" will focus on the development and history of opera from the 1800s to the present.

"John wants to educate, then we sing the examples of what he talked about," said Swan. "His whole idea is how the Italian opera came to America - Rossini, Puccini and Verdi. The Verdi Opera Theatre does a lot to educate. The concept is to continue the Verdi tradition. Sometimes the MET does Verdi's 'Rigoletto,' but they're doing more contemporary music. We're trying to keep the Italian tradition alive. Italians are very passionate people. They just love life and singing. All vocal music comes from Italy, the church in Rome, around the 15th-16th century."

Zaretti, in addition to talking about the history of opera, will also display his collection of rare opera posters.

"It's a fascinating story," said Zaretti, a Canton resident. "During the gold rush days, opera houses were above bars and would burn down all the time because they didn't have electricity. The program will follow the history with art from Puccini's 'Girl of the Golden West' and 'La Bohème.' Caruso came in the era of the phonograph around 1904. There's a lot of great stars in opera and a lot of stories."

Zaretti hopes in the near future that the Verdi Opera Theatre of Michigan will be able to take productions such as "Opera Encore" to the new performing arts center in Canton.

"We'd like to expand beyond just piano accompaniment to maybe even stage operas," said Zaretti. "We're finding the community is realizing the value of the arts. The heart and soul of the community is the arts program."

It looks like Zaretti may get his wish. Joan Noricks, a board member of Partnership for the Arts, which is overseeing the project, said decisions about the new performing arts center will be made sometime in March.

"It's very exciting," said Noricks. "In the next couple of weeks we'll be receiving the report from the consultant (AMS Planning & Research in Connecticut) and the Partnership for the Arts will come together to analyze it and make a determination of whether or not a fund-raising plan and perhaps a ground-breaking in spring 2001."

Have an interesting idea for a story? Call arts reporter Linda Ann Chomin at (734) 953-2145 or send e-mail to lchomin@oe.homecomm.net

Dedication:
(Photo below)
Linette Popoff-Parks and Velda Kelly (left) rehearse Edward Elgar's "Sonata for Violin and Piano."

MADONNA FACULTY SAYS LET US ENTERTAIN YOU

STORY BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
PHOTOS BY PAUL HURSCHEMAN

Linette Popoff-Parks calmly talks about the upcoming faculty recital at Madonna University. The music department chairman is excited about the eclectic program but states matter-of-factly that faculty frequently perform throughout metro Detroit. That's one of the benefits students receive when they take music courses at the university. "We're performers anyway," said Popoff-Parks, a Plymouth resident. "It gives the student a chance to hear us. It's important for them to hear what we can do. And it's important for the community. We're offering them the opportunity to enjoy music. We will also talk about the music we're going to play, so we're an educator as well as an entertainer."

Popoff-Parks will be joined by three faculty members for the program on Sunday, Feb. 27, in Kresge Hall. An accompanist and chamber musician for series such as the Birmingham Musicale and the Grosse Pointe Chamber Music Society, Popoff-Parks recently accompanied New York baritone Erik Chalfant in an afternoon of classical and

contemporary song at Nardin Park United Methodist Church in Farmington Hills. She'll play Edward Elgar's "Sonata for Violin and Piano" with guest violinist Velda Kelly at the Madonna University recital. Proceeds from the \$5 admission will support the music scholarship fund. "The recital is a nice variety of genres, styles, and colors with different instruments - flute, piano and voice," said Popoff-Parks. "We look to hire adjunct professors who are strong performers. All of our staff are devoted teachers who have the love of music in their hearts that drives them everyday."

Popoff-Parks is proud of the university that offers a major in music, with concentrations in performance, education, management and church music.

Please see FACULTY, C2

What: The Madonna University music faculty plays a recital of music by Elgar, Bolting, Poulenc, and Mahler.

When: 3 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 27.

Where: Kresge Hall on the campus of Madonna University, 36000 Schoolcraft, at Levan, Livonia.

Tickets: \$5, supports the music scholarship fund. For more information, call (734) 432-5709.



STAFF PHOTO BY SARAH MITCHELL

Vibrant sculptures: Michael Ragins stands by "Pennsylvania Moon Set."

Artist creates works of beauty in spite of 'fate'

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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"Fate" is an appropriate title for the first work of Michael Ragins' newest series, which combines sculpture and painting. If it hadn't been for the devastating illness Neurofibromatosis, Ragins may never have begun to create works consisting primarily of yarn and sticks. The nerve disorder caused fibrous tumors to grow on his spine and made it difficult for him to use his arms and legs.

After surgery to remove the fibromas, Ragins began the long road back to recovery in rehab at the University of Michigan Medical Center. Instead of working in stained glass with the rest of the patients, Ragins asked his wife Annie to bring him some yarn and sticks. A graduate of Creative Studies, Ragins began his career as a painter. After earning a certificate for K-12 art education from Marygrove College, he taught in Detroit Public Schools but continued to paint. He discovered sculpture in graduate school at Wayne State University. It was during this time, that he developed medical problems. Within two years he was completely disabled and unable to continue teaching.

"I wanted to be a poetry painter but then the Dada Please see FATE, C3

Theatre Guild of Livonia-Redford presents 'Godspell'

BY KEELY WYONIK
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"Godspell" is one of Teri Giordano's favorite musicals. She auditioned for a part in the Theatre Guild of Livonia-Redford production, hoping to get cast in the ensemble. But director Jennifer Rembicz decided Giordano would be perfect as Mary Magdalene in the show that opened Friday and continues weekends through March 11.

"The song that she sings is 'By My Side,' and Teri has a beautiful soprano voice," said Rembicz. "She also read very well for the part, and I knew she could pull it off even though she didn't have the acting experience. After all, that's what directors are for, to direct the actors and help them develop their characters."

"It's a great opportunity," said Giordano, a Livonia resident and graduate of Stevenson High School. "I've learned so much. It's been really interesting to step into the character and see how someone like her would feel."

Giordano is taking voice lessons and sings at weddings and memorial services. "My mom always wanted to sing but God gave me the voice," said Giordano. "I sing for my mother and my family. My mom and sister encouraged me to audition for the show."

In high school Giordano sang in the choir and was cast in the ensemble of two musicals presented by Jumpsstart the Arts, a summer theater program for teens.

Based on the Gospel according to St. Matthew, "Godspell," an award-winning musical by John-Michael Tebbelak with music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz, opened off-Broadway on May 17, 1971. It ran for 2,127 performances off-Broadway, and 527 on Broadway.

Rembicz set the play in the year 2000 instead of the 1970s so audiences could identify with it better. "It read well then, and it was very controversial," she said. The characters wore clown-like costumes. Jesus had a clown nose, and wore a Superman shirt.

In the Theatre Guild of Livonia-Redford production, Jesus still wears a Superman shirt, but he's also wearing carpenter jeans because, Rembicz explains, Jesus was a carpenter. To add authenticity to the show, Rembicz used the Bible and read the Gospel according to St. Matthew. The show made a lot more sense

Please see GODSPELL, C3

On the set: Caleb Gilbert (left to right), Jennifer Rembicz, Kevin Henthousier and Keri Wayne on the set of "Godspell."



HELP WANTED



Self portrait: This oil painting from the Vincent van Gogh, Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam is one of 70 works in an exhibition opening March 12 at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Art museum searches for volunteers for van Gogh's 'Face to Face' exhibit

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Three weeks to go and counting. Dianne Abel is keeping track of the days until - "Van Gogh: Face to Face" - the exhibit of the year opens at the Detroit Institute of Arts. Abel, associate director of development, volunteer services and special events, is responsible for recruiting volunteers to staff the 11 galleries that will showcase 70 paintings and drawings on loan from private collections and museums around the world.

"I don't think anyone ever imagined the magnitude of this exhibit," said Abel. "We're seeking to fill 2,800 volunteer positions dur-

ing the 13-week run. We've already sold 80,000 tickets, and have people calling from Indiana to Chicago and Cleveland. Excited is an understatement. Overwhelmed is closer to it. We've never had an exhibit of this magnitude."

"The 18 shifts a week we'll have for van Gogh is above and beyond everything we do," added volunteer coordinator Gloria Parker. "We're excited but it's a little scary, also."

More than 300,000 visitors walked through the "Splendors of Ancient Egypt" exhibit in a span of six months in 1997. The museum expects as many people to visit the van Gogh

Please see VAN GOGH, C3

Volunteers for van Gogh

For information on volunteering in the galleries for the "Van Gogh: Face to Face" exhibition at the Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., call (313) 833-0247 or visit the Web site: www.dia.org. The exhibit opens Sunday, March 12, and closes Sunday, June 4. Volunteers will have their choice of these shifts:

- Friday/Saturday - 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., 1:45 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., 4:45 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- Sunday/Thursday - 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. or 1:30 - 5 p.m.

An orientation in the lecture hall 12:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 27, will acquaint prospective volunteers with the DIA's eight service committees. The primary focus of the meeting will be on van Gogh volunteers.