

Sunday, January 21, 2001

## ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS



LINDA ANN CHOMIN

## Players enjoy challenge of new music

Andrew Anderson isn't sure if his performance of Tom Johnson's piece for solo string bass will be successful but he's having a good time exploring the composition meant to challenge musicians. Anderson will attempt to play *Building A Difficult Piece for Solo String Bass* with the Plymouth Symphony Orchestra during two chamber concerts on Saturday, Jan. 27 and Feb. 3.

This is the first time Anderson will play an avant-garde bass solo even though he began studies on the instrument 10 years ago and grew up listening to his father David's bass solos. David Anderson, a member of the Portland (Oregon) Opera, favors the traditional music of Bach, Beethoven and Mozart.

"It's outside of what I would usually play for a solo. I have to talk through the whole thing," said Anderson, who's pursuing a bachelor's degree in string bass performance and instrumental education at the University of Michigan School of Music in Ann Arbor. Anderson joined the Plymouth Symphony Orchestra two years ago and also plays with the Flint and Ann Arbor Symphonic orchestras.

"In the beginning I'm reading instructions and there's not much music. Eventually I'm playing intricate chromatic passages."

## Fascinating

"It's a fascinating piece meant to be comedy. You're supposed to hum it up a bit. This kind of music is not for everyone. It's something to bear in mind. If you hear it and think you don't like it, give it a chance."

Listening and being open to what you hear is the key to enjoying any



PHOTO BY CATHERINE BYRD

**Bass soloist: Andrew Anderson is looking forward to playing his first avant-garde piece with the Plymouth Symphony Orchestra.**

new music. Plymouth Symphony Orchestra conductor Nan Washburn tries to program several new works each season that challenge the orchestra and audience. Last season, Farberman's contemporary concerto for jazz drummer and Vandervelde's *Cafes of Melbourne* for solo accordion opened up new worlds to musicians and listeners much to the delight of Washburn who's won 15 ASCAP awards for adventurous programming from the American Symphony Orchestra League.

## Theater type piece

*Falling* is a theater type piece with narrative," said Washburn. "It gets harder and harder because he has to speak and play at the same time. It's

Please see **ENTERTAINMENT, C3**

Tell tale: Corinne Stavish will tell the tale of "Noah and the Giant Og" at a Storytelling Festival hosted by Canton Project Arts.

## Once upon a time

## Storytelling appeals to the kid in everyone

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN  
STAFF WRITER  
lchomin@oe.homecomm.net

Corinne Stavish bubbles with excitement as she tells the story about a giant hitching a ride on Noah's Ark. Stavish loves to tell Jewish folktales like *Noah and the Giant Og*, one of the stories she heard while growing up. Her voice rises then falls as she weaves the tale about the animals sharing their leaves and milk with the giant during their 40-day journey.

Stavish is having as much fun as she hopes the children will have when they attend a Storytelling Festival hosted by Canton Project Arts on Jan. 27. The afternoon performance, featuring Stavish's *Noah and the Giant Og*, is geared toward families. An evening performance treats adults to whimsical stories about parenting and a modern version of a biblical parable by Stavish. Syd Lieberman, a national storyteller, and Craig Roney, a professor who specializes in children's literature at Wayne State University, will join Stavish for the telling.

"What is unique about Jewish folklore is it's probably more representative of world folklore," said Stavish, a Southfield resident and instructor at Lawrence Technological University. "The reason is Chinese were isolated to China, Japanese to Japan, but Jews are the only people we know who have lived all over the world. They would hear a story and retell it with that which was familiar to them."

## Family stories

Stavish specializes in relaying Jewish folktales with a Russian flavor because of her Eastern European background. She feels family stories such as hers are being lost even though there's been a resurgence in storytelling. Today, public venues provide the only opportunity for many to share in the art that's existed since the beginning of civilization.

"I can hear my grandfather saying 'I should go out and pay to hear stories? Uncle Mark tells better stories,'" said Stavish. "The best stories are told around kitchen tables. So go home and do that. Why do people need a workshop? My grandparents didn't take workshops."

"Family stories were always a part of culture. TV changed that. It's gone from porches to public storytelling because we're no longer hearing them at the kitchen table. Storytelling has always been part of Jewish tradition because rabbis have always told such great stories."

Syd Lieberman is a funny guy who thinks he's a

frustrated rabbi.

Lieberman began telling stories 18 years ago when he was going through a mid-life crisis at age 35. He was so scared at his first show that he thought he wouldn't remember the stories. His wife sat in the audience with a story card to remind him. He shouldn't have worried though. Storytelling came naturally to him. Today, Lieberman is known as one of the country's leading tellers of Jewish stories.

"My father was a used car salesman so he always had a lot of stories," said Lieberman who taught high school English for 30 years. "My mother could go to the grocery store and turn it into an opera. She creates characters and voicings and turns it into a play."

Lieberman's stories frequently have messages. His picture book version of an old tale, *The Wise Shoemaker of Studena*, teaches children that they shouldn't judge people by appearances.

"Kids are thirsty to hear stories," said Lieberman, who's currently working on stories about a Fabergé Egg in the Field Museum's upcoming exhibition of Kremlin gold. "These are Jewish folktales. They're fun but you don't have to be Jewish to enjoy them."

And you don't have to be a kid to enjoy storytelling. Lieberman will have the evening performance audience laughing with his stories about parenting and other obstacles adults encounter. "Good stories touch the universal - it touches all people," said Lieberman who's told stories all over the world. "One story I tell about hospitals, they laughed even in New Zealand. I want people to know storytelling isn't just for kids. It will be fun."

## Conveying information

Craig Roney agrees storytelling is a fun medium but it also conveys information. Roney gives workshops for teachers in how to use storytelling to aug-

ment curriculum, especially history classes.

"If we can believe what anthropologists are telling us, storytelling was the beginning of culture," said Roney, a Northville resident who taught his first storytelling class at Wayne State University in 1977. "It's as old as human oral communication and was used as a medium of instruction and entertainment. A culture used it to share its history, morals and beliefs. In the Middle Ages story-tellers moved from one country to another and it enabled one culture to understand another."

"Now we have radio, TV and computers that command our attention but storytelling's never gone away and that speaks to its power. The major communication throughout the world is oral not print. Storytelling is the major means by which we make sense of our world. Immediacy makes it very powerful."

Barb King was so mesmerized by the stories she heard at last year's festival she decided to volunteer to serve on the Canton Project Arts committee. She'll co-chairing the storytelling event with Barbara Standford.

"What I love about storytelling is that you find

Please see **STORYTELLING, C3**



Syd Lieberman



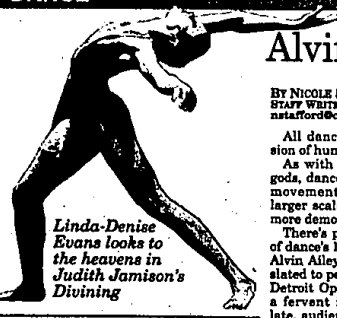
Craig Roney



Corinne Stavish

**Storytelling Festival**  
What: Canton Project Arts presents storytellers Syd Lieberman, Corinne Stavish and Craig Roney. When: 1 p.m. (family performance, recommended for ages 4 and up, tickets \$3) and 7:30 p.m. (adults, \$5) Saturday, Jan. 27. For tickets, call (734) 397-6450. Where: Summit on the Park, 46000 Summit Parkway, west of Canton Center Road, south of Cherry Hill, Canton.

## DANCE



Linda-Denise Evans looks to the heavens in Judith Jamison's *Divining*

## Alvin Ailey dancers express their spirituality

BY NICOLE STAFFORD  
STAFF WRITER  
nstafford@oe.homecomm.net

All dance ultimately is an expression of human spirituality. As with tribal prayers to the rain gods, dance plays to the heavens. Its movement expresses emotion on a larger scale, and its message is often more demonstrative than words.

There's probably no better example of dance's link to spirituality than the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, slated to perform Jan. 31-Feb. 4 at the Detroit Opera House. And, with such a fervent interest in spirituality of late, audiences are ripe to partake in the dance company's traditions and in the renowned works of its founder, choreographer Alvin Ailey, who died in 1989.

There is a spirituality that permeates all his work, said Penny Godboldo, chair of dance at Marygrove College and a former student at The Ailey School. "Though Ailey's company has always been popular, because there is a deeper emphasis on spiritu-

ality, audiences may be more open to it."

Predilections aside, attending an Ailey company performance, she said, is always a cathartic experience. "You should come out of it - spent, just totally wiped out."

Indeed that's probably a foregone conclusion in Detroit where the company will perform five full-length shows and one 60-minute, family-oriented production.

Each performance features three to four pieces by a variety of choreographers, including works by company director and longtime Ailey dancer Judith Jamison, and culminates with Ailey's 1960s masterpiece *Revelations*. Set to Black spirituals, *Revelations* will be performed in Detroit to live music by Detroit's Rudy Hawkins Singers.

"With live music, there's this wonderful vibration in the air," said Godboldo, recalling her own experience of seeing the piece done with a live choir, one she compares to attending services in a large church sanctuary.

"There's that something that takes place between the performers and the audience. You get this wonderful energy and electricity happening."

*Revelations* also directly speaks to the African American religious experience; the work is based on Ailey's childhood memories of attending Baptist church service in Texas.

Though Ailey as an African American artist mined his spiritual traditions, the choreographer's ability to tap universal human emotions is what's most often noted about him. And many of his works tackle the human condition first then reach into spirituality.

"The majority of Mr. Ailey's ballets are about people," said Matthew Rushing, a senior Ailey dancer slated to perform in Detroit. "Mr. Ailey's ballets deal with people and people's emotions. And those emotions directly tie into spirituality."

Ailey's *Phases*, a suite of four abstract dances set to jazz, taps the gamut of human emotions. *Blues*

Please see **DANCERS, C3**