

Sunday, February 4, 2001

ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS



LINDA ANN CHOMIN

Music keeps couples together

Vladymyr Sheziuk met his wife outside the music college in Lviv, Ukraine where he was a student. He was 20, Luba was 17. For him it was love at first sight.

"I saw this very nice girl, tall with high heels, thick hair. I never saw so nice hair before. I said 'whoa.' I asked my friends who knows this girl?" Sheziuk went on to become conductor of the Bolshoi Theater and then the Livonia Symphony Orchestra after immigrating to the U.S. in 1991. Luba became accompanist for the Lviv Conservatory for the next 25 years. This year, they celebrate 33 years of marriage, and music is the key.

On Sunday, Feb. 11, they'll celebrate Valentine's Day early by listening to a program of romantic music at a chamber concert by the Livonia Symphony Orchestra in the Livonia Civic Center Library Auditorium. He'll be on the

podium, she in the audience but they'll be united when they hear their favorite song.

"Reaching for us in Luba's Theme from Dr. Zhivago," said Sheziuk. "It's the first movie we saw in America. But I like this program. It's very nice, warm music and classical and funny."

Barbara Pierce, who sang with the orchestra at its fund-raising event at Wonderland Mall in Livonia, will surely charm the audience and at least one member of the orchestra with her rendition of *My Funny Valentine* by Rodgers and Hart. French horn player Carl Karoub and his wife, Deanna, claim the sentimental song for their own. The two met when he was an instrumental music teacher instructing students at the elementary school every Friday.

"We met over pumpkins," said Karoub. "She was trying to carry



STAFF PHOTO BY TOM HAVLEY

Valentine bouquet: The Livonia Symphony Orchestra violinists rehearse romantic music for the Feb. 11 chamber concert.

pumpkins into the school and didn't have enough hands so I volunteered to help her."

Thirty-eight years of marriage later, the Karoub's still find magic in the sentimental lines of *My Funny Valentine*.

"It's an old favorite made popular by Frank Sinatra," said Karoub. "It's one of our favorites."

But then so is much of the music on the program including Stephen Sondheim's *Send in the Clowns* and *All I Ask of You* from Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Phantom of the Opera*, which Karoub is arranging. Karoub's also looking forward to hearing Pierce sing *One Fine Day* (a *Dee Dee* from Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, and *Habanera* from Bizet's *Carmen*. Pierce teaches singing for the Creative and Performing Arts Program at Churchill High School in Livonia. Orchestra bassoonist Jim Poe will shine with *Solo De Concerto* by Gabriel Piore. The audience will also hear selections from *Porgy and Bess*, and a Beatles medley.

"There's a heavy emphasis on romantic music but with a great variety from *Madame Butterfly* to a Beatles medley."

Please see L1-MUSIC, C5



Cry for attention: Mark Rothko used the subway on numerous occasions to explore the human condition. There's a sense of anonymity about this woman who draws attention to herself by wearing a bright red coat.

Urban isolation: Solitary figures fascinated Mark Rothko. This untitled portrait of a boy, posed in an apartment interior, was painted in 1939.

U-M exhibition documents Rothko's evolution as a painter

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

Long before Mark Rothko became one of the New York artists known as abstract expressionists, this Russian immigrant expressed the same concerns about the human condition as Adolph Gottlieb and other artists he later befriended.

Best known as a color field painter, Rothko turned to the figure to portray anonymity, isolation, fragility, and man's mortality. The solitary nature of human existence is a theme that runs through his work from as early as 1933 through the mid-1940s.

Mark Rothko and the Lure of the Figure: Paintings 1933-1946, an exhibition at the University of Michigan Museum of Art, documents this era of the painter's career, which laid the groundwork for the abstract canvases to come in the 1950s and '60s. Organized by



Sacrificial theme: This untitled painting is one of several works from the early 1940s when Rothko, influenced by fellow artist Adolph Gottlieb, begins compartmentalizing his canvas.

Annette Dixon, curator of Western Art at the museum, the 15 oil paintings give viewers a fascinating look at the evolution of an artist who became a master at painting fields of color that float and swirl with the edges of the canvas.

Rothko Collection

An exhibition of this depth is possible because the majority of works come from the collection of Dr. Christopher Rothko, the artist's son, and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Until last August, Christopher worked as a psychother-

apist and taught at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. A 1994 show at the museum, selected entirely from Christopher's collection, concentrated on the 1940s to 1960s.

"Christopher preferred we show an earlier period we were less familiar with," said Dixon. "Most people don't know Rothko used the figure. He experiments with saying they're vulnerable and isolated. He's focusing on man's mortality, his place in the universe, and death as the ultimate barrier. There's a tragic sense to his art, an impending doom."

Dixon tells Rothko's story in a suc-

cession of stages. The earliest work in the show, *Bathers* on a bench, was painted at a time when Rothko was struggling with his ability to render the figure accurately, but also with his own identity. He signed the work by his given name, Marcus Rothkowitz, which he legally changed in 1939. The palette of his early work is somber, the figures haunting.

"He was creating a sense of drama with distorted human forms," said Dixon. "Twilight was his favorite time of day. He's emphasizing the passage of time. It's done quickly and roughly with energy and vigor. He's working out how to place figures in space."

Psychological dimensions

Rothko continued to install drama in his figures in the 1930s, a period when he looked to urban surroundings for subject matter. (Rothko briefly worked as an actor in Portland, Ore. after studies at the Art Students League in New York City.) He frequently places solitary figures in interiors, hemming them in with physical and psychological borders. By the late '30s Rothko, in an untitled nude, begins dividing the canvas into the rectangles, which dominate his work in the late 1950s.

"There are some 300 works Rothko painted from the '20s to the '40s," said Dixon. "I wanted at least one landscape (*Bathers*), interiors from the 1930s, subways, surreal then his playful period and also his transitional stage before he goes on to the flatly painted areas of color."

Please see ROTHKO, C2

JAZZ

Trio's mellow sound moves lovers of traditional jazz

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

Dale Grisa carresses the keys of the piano as he and trio members Chuck Hall and Alex Trajano ease into the first song of their set on a winter Tuesday evening at Sweet Lorraine's in the Livonia Marriott.

Outside it's cold and damp, but inside the atmosphere is hot and smokin'. Members of the trio nod back and forth as one after the other takes the lead in improvising.

"I've played with lots of bass and drum combinations," said Grisa, a Livonia resident. "We have a musical communication that's very special."

What: The Dale Grisa Trio plays traditional acoustic jazz.
When: 8-8 p.m. Tuesday, ongoing engagement.
Where: Sweet Lorraine's in the Livonia Marriott Hotel, 17180 N. Leonard Park Dr., call (734) 953-2480.

"Chemistry has a lot to do with it," adds bassist Chuck Hall. "I've been in groups where they bring people in to see how it will work out and if it will."

Chemistry indeed plays a role but so does their long-standing friendships. Grisa and Hall hung around in the same jazz circles in the late 1980s. Drummer Alex Trajano and Grisa met while studying in the jazz program at Wayne State University at about the same time.

"When we were still in school we'd hold jam sessions at Dale's house," said Trajano, a Troy resident. "At night we'd go out and listen to different musicians around town. It's the best learning experience to be together."

"You get a chance to grow and get next to the music," added Hall.

Over the years, they've played together in different groups but always maintained the friendships. Trajano and Hall are members of the Jeff Haas Trio and can

be heard on their latest release—*The Bridge Lives* as well as the first CD *Generation to Generation*. Trajano plays with Blue Dog, Grisa with Stewart Frank.

In November they formed the Dale Grisa Trio to play traditional acoustic jazz and originals at Sweet Lorraine's. They're in the process of recording their debut CD at Thrillia Park Records. Trajano's Clawson recording studio. Artists from Marcus Belgrave to Gary Schunk and Charlie Gabriel have gone into the studio to lay down tracks.

"We all go back so many years," said Hall, a Belleville resident who formerly lived in Ann Arbor. "We've played gigs in different configurations but never just the three of us. I'm 47 now and have a day job so I do it less for money and more for the love and expression."

Each brings a variety of influences to the trio and their individual playing. Hall grew up in the



Mellow sound: Chuck Hall (left) Alex Trajano and Dale Grisa play traditional jazz and originals every Tuesday night at Sweet Lorraine's in Livonia.

Please see JAZZ, C2