Disney *from page B1*

known for his work with Janet Jackson and Sting, and Olympic medalists Kristi Yamaguchi, Scott Hamilton, Katarina Witt, and Nancy Kerrigan.

Disney's Jungle Adventures on Ice marks the first time a Disney on Ice production has premiered on both sides of the ocean. The two independent world-class casts left Lakeland, Fla., where the show was developed, for the open road on road on Sept. 1. They will tour 45 different countries, and the show will be presented in the home country's language.

How does that translate?

"Human nature is ultimately the same across all borders," said Pearson. "We hold the same ideals, respecting, having a warm family to protect you. Family is a good thing, growing up is a happy thing.

"The story is about how you grow and develop your role within your family. There's a story for each generation."

Jungle Book, he believes, appeals to grandparents, *Tarzan* to parents, and *The Lion King* to kids.

"Our job is to make it a three-hour experience that makes you feel like you've been to another part of the world, and remind you that the most important people are the ones next to you," said Pearson.

"This is a happy experience, sometimes we scare you, and there's a lot of romance involved. You walk into the jungle, and that's a scary place. The costumes are amazing. It's one of the most spectacular shows you'll ever see."

Chamber series features string trio

■ The Chamber Music at the Scarab Club series focuses on audience-friendly musical presentations.

The Chamber Music at the Scarab Club will present the Borsarello String Trio, 7 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 25 in a program of works by Bach, Boridin and Schubert in the main gallery of the Scarab Club in Detroit.

Tickets are $15, available at the door, or call (248) 474-8930 for more information. The Scarab Club is at 217 Farnsworth, behind the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Founded in 1998 by violinist Velda Kelly of Farmington, and cellist Nadine Deleury of Birmingham, the Chamber Music at the Scarab Club series focuses on audience-friendly musical presentations and programs.

Sunday's concert, features the Parisian-based Borsarello String Trio, three brothers — violinist, Jean-Luc, violist, Jacques, and cellist, Frederic.

They are dedicated to promoting the string repertoire, and also enjoy collaborating with guest artists. The Schubert C Major quintet to be performed at the Scarab Club is an excellent example of this. Kelly and Deleury will join them for the performance of this beautiful work.

"String trios have their own unique challenges that make intonation and the blending of tone colors particularly difficult," said Kelly. "Unlike a string quartet, a trio lacks a second violin to link the range of the (first) violin to that of the viola. Each voice in a string trio is that of a soloist and is always very exposed. The warm sonority of the Borsarello's three Italian instruments made during the same period, helps them meet these challenges."

The group's latest recording is a beautiful example of their sense of homogeneity in sound, style and intonation. "The CD of six Bach Preludes and a Fugues, arranged for string trio by Mozart, is pure delight," said Kelly.

In addition to their busy schedule as a trio, the brothers all hold teaching positions at highly reputable conservatories. Jean-Luc is a successful artist who has won many competitions and has had many exhibits. He gets his inspiration from Provence landscapes. Frederic is also a composer of music for the cello. Jacques has written and published several novels.

The trio tours extensively and has performed in Europe, New Caledonia and Asia.

Kelly has been teaching and performing in metropolitan Detroit since 1983. She is a member of the Michigan Opera Theatre Orchestra, performs as an extra with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and is co-artistic director of Chamber Music at the Scarab Club.

Plymouth Theatre Guild outstanding in 'South Pacific'

Plymouth Theatre Guild presents the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical "South Pacific" 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, Feb. 23-24, March 2-3; and 6 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 25, at the Water Tower Theatre, Northville. Tickets, $12, $8 ages 18 and under. Call (248) 349-7110.

■ Director Kathleen Booker and Assistant Director Dennis Hubel, and their crew, have done an excellent job bringing a World War II South Pacific Island experience to the Water Tower Theatre.

BY PAMELA JOY MCGOWAN
SPECIAL WRITER

There ain't nothin' like the talents of the Plymouth Theatre Guild cast and crew — a talent that can be witnessed in their current production, *South Pacific*.

The popular Rodgers and Hammerstein musical is, for the most part, two separate love stories. The first is a love between a young nurse named Nellie Forbush (Susan Morenda) and a middle-aged Frenchman named Emile de Becque (Kerry Plague).

They meet after she is stationed on the island on which he has found refuge for a crime he committed in France. The relationship is soon ambushed by the fact that he was previously married to a Polynesian woman, and her conservative, prejudice upbringing pushes her to *Wash That Man Right Outta Her Hair*. She later realizes the error of her ways when she is forced to wait for him to return from a dangerous military mission.

A youthful Lt. Joseph Cable (Anthony J. Provenzola) discovers true love on a visit to Bali Ha'I, a neighboring island. The object of his affection is a very young native girl, Liat (Sarah Curle). She is the daughter of Bloody Mary (Kristin Curle) who sells overpriced grass skirts and shrunken heads to the military men — she seems to disregard the women — on the island. Once again, the stigma of interracial relationships comes between lovers and is not overcome until it may be too late.

The strong social issues regarding race and war are greatly softened by the music and humor in this production. The comedic lead is definitely Toby Booker playing Luther Billis. Booker's *There is Nothin' Like a Dame* performed with the assistance of several handsome and talented sailors, Seabees and Marines, and his Thanksgiving Follies finale scenes, are absolute show-stealers. And how he survives that amazing tumble out of the women's dressing tent with coconut shells strapped to his chest is a mystery itself.

Leads

The leads played by Plymouth-Salem High School sophomore Susan Merenda, Canton resident Kerry Plague, and Anthony J. Provenzola of Farmington Hills, are strong in both genres: acting and singing. With the assistance of a fine orchestra conducted by Steve Woznicki, each voice and song contributes to the story in a positive way.

Unfortunately, Sarah Curle's character has no speaking parts and is forced to rely on the "sign language" of "Happy Talk" and the language of love.

Other notable performances include Bruce White as Captain Brackett, and Dennis Day as Commander William Harbison. Their interactions with each other never miss a mark. Eric Decker does a great job as Stewpot, joining Booker's quest for laughs, and getting them. Decker, Booker and the other Sailors, Seabees and Marines really shine in the tender moment of "Bali Ha'I" when they all become entranced by the sight and sounds of the nearby island. And their dancing isn't bad either.

The biggest scene-stealer would have to be Jim McNiff as the Shore Patrolman. Though his character is onstage barely a few minutes, the audience cannot miss his charged humor and stage presence.

Sets are well done, and the sound and lighting of this fairly complex production, appear quite flawless. Director Kathleen Booker and Assistant Director Dennis Hubel, and their crew, have done an excellent job bringing a World War II South Pacific Island experience to the Water Tower Theatre in Northville.

Pamela Joy McGowan is a Livonia resident and reviews community theater productions for the Observer Newspapers.

Finding fresh sights and sounds in the arts, it's easy to stay in touch

BACKSTAGE PASS

ANN DELISI

It seems that I keep having the same conversation with different people.

"Well, it has finally happened."

Which leads me to ask, "What has finally happened?"

"I'd like some new music to listen to, but I have no idea where to turn."

The inference is that we all inevitably reach an age in which we lose touch with current tastes in popular music. Many who grew up in the 1960s and 1970s thought that new music would always be a big part of their lives. The admission that they have lost touch with current styles is difficult, and usually delivered in the tone that suggests the end of a relationship.

Because I've made the pursuit of new sounds my livelihood, they approach me for a bit of counseling. So, here it goes.

Fresh sounds

Friends, you're not getting older, you're getting busier. The time you have to explore an artist you may like has seemingly vanished. What you are exposed to are boy bands and rap performers who may not appeal to you. I assure you that fresh sounds are being produced that, with a little bit of effort, will be as meaningful to you as ever.

And, because you asked, I'm proud to steer you to the music of Stewart Francke, who just assembled the largest band we've seen for an edition of Detroit Public Television's *Backstage Pass*, which airs at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 22, and Friday night at 1 a.m.

The search for something fresh also extends to the theater. Ideally, the theater companies and their audiences will be united in their desire to occasionally stray from the familiar. When the playwright is William Shakespeare, you tend to be more adventurous.

Theater-goers

Even seasoned theater-goers may have responded with a "Huh?" when the Hilberry Theatre announced it would present *Cymbeline* during its current season.

"We wanted to offer a new Shakespeare experience. We have a long tradition of presenting his plays and realize that many who enjoy our productions have seen *Julius Caesar* and other popular works," says Blair Anderson, head of the theater department at Wayne State University, home of the Hilberry.

Should you be skeptical about a Shakespeare play that is so unheralded? Anderson believes *Cymbeline* is worthy of greater attention.

"It is a compelling love story, full of adventure and villainy. Although a complex tale involving many characters, the plot is very clear the way it is presented."

Performances of *Cymbeline* are scheduled through April 6.

Visual arts

Looking for a change is scenery in the visual arts? The Art Gallery of Windsor has a beautiful new home on Riverside Drive, having moved from a lengthy occupancy at the Devonshire Mall. Best of all, the gallery was ready with a noteworthy exhibition after the ribbon-cutting ceremony. Impressionist Masterworks showcases the paintings of Monet, Cezanne, Renoir, Gaugin, Van Gogh, Degas and other masters.

It is human nature to seek something new when we get restless with the familiar. As we expand our appetite in music, theater and the visual arts, we often discover what we're looking for in an artist who makes that hunger a fundamental part of his or her creative process. Therein lies the excitement for all of us to share.

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