

Thursday, March 29, 2001

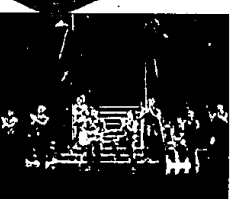
## THE WEEKEND

FRIDAY



Joanne Shenandoah performs at the Concert of Colors - An Evening of Native American Music, 8:30 p.m. at Henry Ford Museum's Lovett Hall in Dearborn. Doors open 7:30 p.m. Tickets \$15, call (313) 664-2000 or (313) 842-7010.

SATURDAY



See Gumboots, a dance concept which originated in the mines of South Africa, 8 p.m. at Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts in Detroit. Tickets \$25-\$40, call (313) 963-2366.

SUNDAY



Mary Gutzis stars as Emma Goldman in "Ragtime," 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. at the Fisher Theatre, 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit. Tickets \$35-\$75, call (313) 872-1000.



Blow-out: The Brass Band of Battle Creek is coming to Ann Arbor Friday to present a concert.

## Giving A Toot

### Brass band blows into town for concert

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN  
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Dr. Jim Gray loves traditional British brass band music so much that when he no longer felt capable of playing at the same level as the rest of the group he founded with his brother William, both stepped aside. Never could they have imagined that one day the Brass Band of Battle Creek would attract musicians of the caliber of Wyllie Gordon, trombonist with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, and from England and all over the U.S. On Friday, March 30, Gordon and the rest of the band, under the direction of Constantine Kitsopoulos, will blow into town to perform a mix of marches and big band favorites as well as classics by Stravinsky and Shostakovich.

#### Growing up with music

"I always loved band music," said Gray, who grew up in Lincoln Park and lived for many years in Bloomfield Hills before moving to the west side of the state. Gray now plays clarinet with the Marshall Community Band during the summer. "My grandfather was a trombonist in circus bands during the Depression and my father was president of the Michigan State Marching Band in the 1940s. We listened to the New York Philharmonic and the U of M Concert Band on the record player. We wore out five of the records from their Soviet Union tour."

The Grays' early exposure to music led to the two pediatricians founding the Brass Band of Battle Creek in 1989. In 1990 they received funding from the Kellogg Foundation and were on their way.

Five members of the Brass Band of Battle Creek will fly in from England

and the sound engineer from Wales. Britain is where the sound originated.

"You might ask why all these English guys? Brass bands really got their start in England in 1859," said Gray. "If you really want to hear brass bands England is the place to go."

Not necessarily. The University Musical Society series is making it possible to swing to the music of the 32-member Brass Band of Battle Creek in its debut performance in Ann Arbor. Gordon, a music instructor at Michigan State University, will lead a medley featuring "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" and "When the Saints Come Marching In." It's sure to make the audience want to get up and dance. Stravinsky's "Firebird" will stir the soul as will the band's rendition of "Lover Man."

"A brass band can perform different styles of music," said Gray. "They can legitimately play 'Firebird' and do it very well in a classic sense and then turn around and do 'Sing, Sing, Sing' and sound like a big band, or play any type of Broadway and Hollywood songs. Technically a brass band can't play 'Firebird' but come hear it and you'll see."

There's a wide dynamic range that can pull you out of your seats. What they don't expect is the sensitive quiet pieces."

Versatility is the reason Randy Hawes joined the band three years ago. Unfortunately he won't be able to play at the Ann Arbor concert because of a scheduling conflict. The Bloomfield Hills trombonist will be performing with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra at Orchestra Hall in Detroit. Like the Grays, Hawes developed a love of British brass music early and later played with the River

City Brass Band in Pittsburgh.

#### Challenging and exciting

"The music is much more challenging and the players are top-notch from all over the world," said Hawes who taught at a brass band camp in Canton two summers ago. "Music is written mainly by British composers. It's very exciting. Some of the most difficult pieces for brass are in the British brass literature."

Gray doesn't have to worry about the difficulty of the music any more, as producer of the band he has an entirely different set of challenges from booking hotel rooms to sending out music six weeks in advance to musicians. In 1998, he coordinated the band's 10-day tour of the United Kingdom including a stop at Royal Albert Hall. While in Ann Arbor he's making sure all will be ready for the musicians to teach master classes at Cass Tech and the Detroit High School for the Fine and Performing Arts during their stay.

"Musicians aren't as difficult to deal with as a bunch of surgeons," said Gray who raised the \$200,000 necessary for the current tour of Michigan which began in Battle Creek then traveled to Interlochen Center for the Arts before arriving at Hill Auditorium.

"The hard part is raising the money. We've received grants from the Kellogg Foundation and the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, plus money from tickets sales from the 2,000 seat hall in Calhoun County where we regularly play. We're planning a summer camp for ages 16 to 24 in Battle Creek for 2002. Young people are the future of brass band music whether they decide to play or are out there in the audience. Brass band music is different from what you've heard. It's rewarding when you hear the music."

## DSO features guest cellist

BY KEELY WYGONIK  
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E-mail is a convenient way to keep in touch with friends especially if you're a busy musician like cellist Steven Isserlis.

The chance to see a friend is one of the reasons he accepted a March 29 to April 1 engagement with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

"I have a good friend in the DSO cello section with whom I have kept up the same running joke through letters, occasional meetings and now e-mails for over 15 years — and it needs a fresh infusion of ideas," said Isserlis in an e-mail interview from his home in London.

The grandson of Russian pianist composer Julius Isserlis, and a descendant of Felix Mendelssohn, Isserlis is a world renowned performer, instructor and musicologist.



Steven Isserlis

He last performed with the DSO in 1992, and will be featured on Camille Saint-Saens' Cello Concerto No. 1.

"I love the Saint-Saens concerto, and not that many orchestras ask for it, and because I wanted to play with Neeme Jarvi, with whom I haven't worked for more years than I care to remember," said Isserlis giving two more reasons why he's looking forward to performing with the DSO.

#### Musical background

He didn't choose to play cello growing up, his family chose it for him.

"It was needed in my family," he said. "My mother played the piano, my father the violin, my elder sister Annette was going to learn the violin, my middle sister Rachel played the violin and our dog howled so there was a vacancy for a cellist."

His warm sense of humor comes across e-mail, and it's easy to see how he could maintain a long distance

Please see CELLIST, B2

## THEATER

## 'Play by Play' parades across stage during marathon

BY KEELY WYGONIK  
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Playing around with scripts is something Heartland Theatre Company does just for the fun of it. Unlike other groups who present the works of others, Heartland works with writers to develop original plays that say something about the human experience.

On Saturday, April 7, Heartland is presenting a 12-hour marathon of one-act plays in the Studio Theatre at Oakland University, southeast corner of Squire and Walton.

Each of the 24 short plays will be presented twice during the evening. Plays range in length from seven to 15 minutes. Four are presented every hour. Most are comedies, some are absurd. Six dramas will be presented, one each hour.

"This is the only fund-raiser we do all year," said Jan Radcliff of Birmingham. "We are committed primarily to the creation, development and presentation of original works, and to the nurturing of the resident theatrical community."

Local actors and directors will present the plays submitted by playwrights from Michigan, Indiana, Massachusetts, New York, Minnesota, Chicago, Connecticut and Scotland.

Of the 24 plays being presented, 11 were written by Michigan playwrights.

**Full day**  
David MacGregor of Livonia is one of those playwrights, and has been participating in the marathon for the past four years.

"It's a full day, there's nothing like it," he said. "It's almost like watching sketch TV. If you don't like what you're seeing in 10 minutes it will be different. Wherever it is people show up, and it's gradually becoming an institution."

His "Towards the Perpetuation of the Species" is typical of the plays you'll see — "short, punchy, self-contained."



**Rehearsing:** Cindy Hansen (left to right), Eric Franz, Kim Howe, and Mark Barerra rehearse their lines for "Accelerated Learning" by Robert Morse of Indianapolis.

A man and woman meet in a bar, and surprise, they're completely honest with one another.

"It's a comedy about the standard dating ritual," said MacGregor who teaches film writing at Wayne State University. "I'm always intrigued with the idea of truth, so much is predicated on spin. If you strip all the facades away what's left? These two people are attracted to each other, but they know each other too well; there's no mystery. They drink too much to forget and start over."

With help from Heartland Theatre Company, MacGregor has written two full-length plays.

"They provided directors, staged readings, actors, to hear this stuff out loud," he said. "It's useful to see the play kind of on its feet. You see what works and what doesn't."

He has a lot respect for the group, what it stands for.

"It's almost a philanthropic exercise," said MacGregor. "They take their love and heart into it for the love of theater."

Please see MARATHON, B2

## HOT



The Shrine Circus is coming to town, Friday, March 30, through Sunday, April 15, at the State Fair Coliseum. Tickets \$8 general admission, \$20, \$15 and \$10 reserved, call (313) 872-1000.

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