

Sunday, October 21, 2001

## ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS



LINDA ANN CHOMIN

**Gypsy song, dance remains as colorful as they did 1,000 years ago**

George Cruze seems tireless as he talks about managing the more than two dozen musicians on the Gypsy Caravan II tour coming to Hill Auditorium as part of the University Musical Society series Thursday, Oct. 25. Cruze needs all the energy he can muster to coordinate the entourage, which began performing cross country on Oct. 5 after flying in from Europe and Asia Oct. 3.

The four different groups — Mahara-ja (India), Esma Redzepova (Macedonia), Fanfare Ciocarlia (Romania) and Antonio El Pipa Flamenco Ensemble (Spain) — keep him busy as they travel together from city to city on the bus.

This day they were in Toronto before heading to Massachusetts and then finally to Ann Arbor. Cruze managed the original Gypsy Caravan tour two years ago so it's not like he lacks

**What:** Gypsy Caravan II: A Celebration of Roma Music and Dance  
**When:** 8 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 25  
**Where:** Hill Auditorium, 825 North University, Ann Arbor  
**Tickets:** \$16-\$32. Call (734) 764-2538

experience who dealing with a bunch of different personalities and requests. Previous to that he spent 15 years on the road as a tour manager for American blues musicians.

"It was the biggest, craziest tour I ever did. This one is really big, really difficult," said Cruze. "It's a showcase of different aspects of the music of the Roma (Gypsy) people. Music is central to their culture. They moved all over Europe and Asia and, of course, America over the centuries. Mahara-ja is representative of music and dance of Rajasthan in India. It's the culture Gypsies started from."

Their migration parallels America's westward movement. The Gypsy Road — that's the romantic term for how it started in Rajasthan — and moved through the Middle East, then Europe and ends in Spain."

Gypsy Caravan II captures all the flavor of the countries' traditional music and dance. A vision of Robert Browning of the World Music Institute, organizers of the tour, Gypsy Caravan brings to the stage the emotional, high energy sounds and sights of Roma culture.

Gypsies have little written history but what is known is the migrations from the Rajasthan desert began nearly a thousand years ago. Over that time, they've been persecuted for their nomadic way of life and beliefs. They were thrown out as heretics from Spain in the 15th century, hunted in France, England and other European countries from the 16th to 18th centuries, and nearly annihilated by the Nazis during the World War II era.

Through it all, Gypsy culture flourished. The tour celebrates the dance and music by spotlighting the four groups. Singer Esma Redzepova, known as the Queen of the Gypsies, is an ambassador for Roma music. She and the rest of the musicians and dancers have become family as they travel the thousands of miles of road.

"We're very good friends. We live like brothers. We have a lot of fun. It's very boring without fun," said Elvis Huna, keyboardist for Redzepova.

At age 23, Huna is the youngest musician on the tour; the oldest is 68.

Please see EXPRESSIONS, C2



**Gypsy caravan:** The brass band Fanfare Ciocarlia performs traditional dance melodies from Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Macedonia.



PHOTOS BY TOM HAWLEY

**Hands on:** Margaret Nowak (standing) shows Helen Lyczak, Barbara Beck and Marjorie Pokorny where to paint their art.

## Just for fun Art therapy stresses process, not product

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN  
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Alice, Vinnie, Holly, Sheryl and Regina don't seem to care about developing skills in the art therapy classes they attend every Thursday at the Redford Community Center. They're too busy having fun.

Art therapist Margaret Nowak knows the process is more important than the product created by these adults with developmental disabilities.

Although goals in therapy vary, art-making requires the use of fine motor skills. It teaches people how to follow directions, to work with others and build communication skills. This session, Nowak is teaching participants to weave with colorful construction paper. Weaving can be difficult, but for most it wasn't much of a problem. When some faltered, Nowak was right there to help.

"They pick colors and patterns. I try to help individuals to do as much as possible on their own," said Nowak, a Livonia resident. "The art class for them is not to work on a skill. It's to enjoy and make things to take home to show their creativity. If they don't want to do a project, they do something else."

Vinnie Conti of Redford wanted to do the project, but he completed it so quickly that Margaret shoved more paper in front of him. He created three drawings of faces within minutes.

Regina Swiderski needed help to use her hands. So far, participants have made bird houses, wind socks and masks. Brush and string painting were among their favorites and lasted for just a day. Sometimes projects, such as the clay ornaments for Christmas and Valentine's Day, last three weeks. And then there were the Guatemalan trouble dolls they made to tell their troubles to. Nowak planned each project for a purpose.

"It's good to find out what their strengths are,



**Inspired:** Vinnie Conti finished his weaving then drew three faces in a matter of minutes.

what activities are difficult to test their abilities," said Nowak.

Unable to speak, Regina uses her head to type in words and messages on her Dynavox screen. Like most of the participants, she lives with family in the area. Alice Dillingham of Westland celebrated her 50th birthday this year with her mother and a cake. Some work outside the home. Holly Balaka of Redford cleans houses. Regina volunteers at Starfish in Westland doing data entry.

Like their lifestyles, each creates art differently. Vinnie makes a smiley face out of glue before mounting the weaving on another sheet of paper.

Alice places dots of glue precisely on each square. "They enjoy being able to do something independently," said Michelle Rumsaas, advocacy and community resources director for the Redford ARC. The organization, now celebrating its 40th anniversary, provides services to people with developmental disabilities and their family.

"We help people to do some fun things. They vote for different things — trips to the Detroit Institute of Arts, International Institute, the art fair in Novi. They like to do the art projects. It's all about people getting out of their homes and enjoying something fun. It's good for their mind. It gets people thinking about being creative."

Lana Richardson has seen growth in the participants she assists in Redford ARC programs. She and Rumsaas work together to provide a variety of experiences after checking site details such as wheelchair accessibility.

"A lot of them are talking more," said Richardson. "I see the change in a lot of them. They're more social."

Nowak teaches every minute of the day. She has taught with VSA arts of Michigan about 15 years and is a volunteer for the emerging artists exhibit at the Redford ARC. Holly, Sheryl and Regina are also artists as well as students.

Nowak, who earned her master's degree from Wayne State and is a member of the Village Arts Council, is displaying her art in the new arts gallery at the Livonia Civic Center library in December.

"It's so much fun. I leave feeling so good. I can't believe I make people feel good and get paid for this. It's so wonderful to be around them. There's so much energy. Everyone is so positive. Nowak doesn't have to wait long before feeling as

Please See ART, C2

## DOCUMENTARY



**Boning up:** Steve Mehler stands in front of a large dog skeleton in the anatomy lab at Michigan State University College of Veterinary Medicine where he's a fourth year student.

## Veterinary students don't horse around

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN  
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Steve Mehler barely has time to catch his breath these days, but at least it's not in front of the camera. As a fourth-year student in the Michigan State University College of Veterinary Medicine, Mehler works up to 14 hours a day, depending on the clinical rotation. This week he's in ultrasound from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and assisting in surgery in the evening.

This is the reality camera crews tried to capture, some days from sun up to sun down, for Vet School Confidential, airing 10 p.m. Tuesdays on the Animal Planet. Each episode follows Mehler, Kent Vince, Rachel Cesar, Jake Langendorfer and Danielle Chapman as they diagnose and treat animals in the clinic after two years of studying anatomy and diseases in the classroom and laboratory.

For Mehler, the most difficult part of the filming was dealing with a worried owner, sick animal and produc-

ers all at the same time. When a chocolate Labrador that had been hit by a car goes home able to walk after surgery, Mehler's exuberant. But when he loses an animal, it can be heart-rending.

"There's nobody in the profession who says they're used to losing an animal," said Mehler. "I try to work with the owners as much as possible. And I show my emotions to a degree. You have to be respectful of your own emotions."

Mehler isn't sorry, though, that he chose a career in veterinary medicine. He decided to go into the field after hearing the inspiring stories of his uncle, Ronald Mehler, a veterinarian with practices in Novi, Southfield and Redford. Mehler's also glad he signed up to be one of the students featured in the Animal Planet program. He watches the show every week it has aired since the filming, which began in October 2000.

"The overall experience was great; the producers

Please See VET, C2